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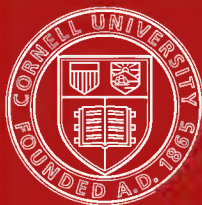
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ENGLISH FICTION

FROM THE FIFTH TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

The stream of fiction is hard to follow. It has its origin in so many sources so widely separated and so divergent in character, and these are in many cases so obscured by remoteness or by insignificance, that they are difficult to discover. When discovered they do not disclose even to daring conjecture their possible influence upon the main current. The stream itself flows with many windings because turned in its course by adverse conditions or actually forced out of its normal channel by insuperable obstacles. It flows too with unsteady motion, now moving in well-defined limits, now submerging adjacent territory and well-nigh engulfing kindred forms and becoming itself sluggish in its forward movement; at other times it dashes on with inexplicable impetuosity and then eddies around some fixed point in its course. Tributaries feed this stream all along its course—tributaries that demand but defy full exploration and tempt the discoverer to lose himself in the mazes of their obscure sources. The author of this book has succeeded well in playing the guide on this stream with its twists and turnings, its lulling quietness and restive dashes, its accretions and its losses. By seeing the end from the beginning he has kept himself from being diverted from his single purpose and has certainly made the journey easier for the next explorer that comes this way.

Dropping the figure we may add more directly that

PREFATORY NOTE

the author has amassed a wealth of valuable material difficult of easy access to any one, and for the general reader well-nigh inaccessible. This is particularly true of the Old and Middle English stories inherently interesting but rarely read because the originals are forbidding and the modernizations not freely circulated. He has subjected this, and all of his material, to careful, though not to studiously critical analysis and reached conclusions that are independent without being whimsically or perversely individual. These conclusions are in general sane and suggestive and are set forth so directly and simply, with so little of academic affectation and technical involutions, as to be readily intelligible and highly entertaining.

The plan of the book is clear and is sufficiently observed to protect the author and readers alike from needless wanderings; and, in spite of the irreconcilable variety of the material, the transitions have been, in the main, skilfully made and the whole book well articulated. While it is not a book for a single sitting it has continued interest and logical connection.

This book may be commended cordially and with confidence to intelligent readers desiring general information on this interesting development in literature; to students requiring a running account of fiction parallel with their closer study; and to those pursuing courses designed especially for instruction and culture.

CHARLES W. KENT.

May 20, 1912.

Charlottesville, Virginia.

PREFACE

This book is an attempt to show with considerable detail the development of English story-telling from the fifth to the twentieth century. It might, with some appropriateness be called a study of the story-telling *instinct* among the English people; for the book treats, not only of the masterpieces of English narrative, but of the crude efforts of our early forefathers. In the extent of the field thus covered, this volume, so far as I have been able to discover, stands alone. Almost every investigation of English fiction begins with the first quarter of the eighteenth century; only two or three extend as far back as the days of Shakespeare. The present work follows the progress of the narrative art from the days of the first Anglo-Saxon songs of heroes to the realistic studies of life in the present day.

Fifteen hundred years of fiction is a tremendous stretch to cover; but it is decidedly unfair to the subject and to the student of literature to begin with Defoe and Richardson, and thus leave the impression that they were the first English story tellers. More, Lyly, Lodge, and Greene were writing fiction long before; the British folk were telling of King Arthur, King Horn, and Robin Hood centuries before the Elizabethans wrote; and before the days of Arthur the Anglo-Saxons were relating the deeds of Beowulf. It is a continuous story, to be begun only at the beginning.

PREFACE

I have entirely excluded American and Colonial writers. Cooper and Hawthorne were not British; neither are William Dean Howells and Henry James, no matter how much they have learned from their English friends. Moreover, American fiction is developing such distinct traits that a study of it is worthy of a separate volume. This I hope to write at no distant date.

The book is not presented as a highly technical dissertation for specialists already well versed in the evolution of this type of literature. The effort has been to produce an untechnical narrative of the general changes and processes through which English story-telling has reached its present form. Intended not only for students making their first investigations in the subject, but also for the general reader outside the college walls, it is written purposely in "popular" style and with as little delay on merely scholarly details as possible. This, it is hoped, will not prove a disadvantage to the scholarly reader, while it will undoubtedly prove a distinct advantage to those whose interest is not won and retained by scholarship alone.

I wish to express my thanks to Miss Mary Hannah Johnson, of the Carnegie Library, Nashville, Tennessee, for aid rendered on many occasions; to Professor George Herbert Clarke, of the George Peabody College for Teachers, for his valuable suggestions; and to the students in my graduate class at Vanderbilt University for their interest and assistance while this volume was in the making.

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ENGLISH FICTION

ENGLISH FICTION

CHAPTER I

THE EARLIEST ATTEMPTS IN ENGLISH FICTION

LITERARY CONDITIONS

HAMLET once declared that "the play 's the thing"; but he would have been much more accurate had he said, "The story 's the thing." All nations, savage or civilized, long for fiction, and it has ever been thus. Among the Greeks Homer was but a culmination of a multitude of legends and traditions that had been told about the campfire or in the family circle for hundreds of years; Virgil found ready for his master hand a mass of folklore known to Romans for centuries before he sang his *Æneid*; the French with their *Song of Roland* and the Germans with their *Nibelungen Lied* are but further illustrations of the native and undying craving for great dreams of what might have been. With none of these nations has the longing been more persistent and more evident than with the English. From their very birth—yes, before they were an organized people bearing one name—they called for stories. That man who could retell these legends in vigorous and inspiring language received all honor; he stood next to the king in appreciation and reverence; he was lovingly called the *scop*,

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the maker, the creator; he was expected to incite men to brave deeds and noble ideals; he was rewarded with liberal gifts of gold and of property; he was the admired molders of tribal emotions and purposes.

To us moderns it would be a weird and fascinating experience to glance into an ancient Anglo-Saxon feast, to see the king and his warriors at the table in the great hall, the crackling fire on stone hearths at either end of the long room, the smoke curling slowly through wide holes in the roof or lingering among the blackened rafters, and along the walls the stone benches where the long-haired harpers sat, taking their turn at singing the deeds of old-time heroes or chanting in unison the brave battles and victories of their present chief. Every man in that hall, from the king to the humblest soldier, was expected to be a singer and to have in memory a store of ballads of olden days; and often, under the excitement of the music and ale, the chief or some warrior snatched the harp from the hands of a minstrel, burst forth into a mighty battle song, and then passed the instrument to another of the feasters to add to the unwritten volume of legendary lore.

Innumerable were the stories of that day. Unfortunately, however, during the incursions of the mad-hearted Danes in the eighth and ninth centuries a multitude of manuscripts containing these ancient tales were destroyed. Still, fate was not entirely heartless; there remain enough shriveled parchments to show the form, the style, the spirit, and the ideals of our primitive fiction. In these we may trace the first rude gropings in that art which, more than a thousand years later,

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made the names of Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens famous throughout the world.

Stopford Brooke¹ has said: "As far as we can go back with certainty we find the Teutonic tribes harpists or singers. . . . Religion and war were the fullest sources of their poetry. . . . At one special point their religion and their war . . . were combined into song—in the mingling of the great myths with the lives of tribal heroes. . . . The doings of the light and darkness, of the heat and cold, were made into mythical stories which gathered around a few and afterwards around many gods whom the personating passion of mankind fitted to the various doings of Nature. . . . These stories grew into legends and sagas of the gods. . . . But the myths thus existing took a fresh life in the war stories. When a great hero arose, did famous deeds, and died, his history grew into a saga. . . . Then, because wonder must belong to him, the Nature myths stole also into history, and the tales of winter and summer, of the gentle doings of the light, and of the battle of light with darkness, were modified and varied into the hero's real adventures till at last we can scarcely distinguish between the hero and the divine being. . . . Thus both the fruitful sources of poetry, worship and battle, gave passion and dignity to the character and deeds of the hero."

The commonest things of life, however, as well as worship and battle, were also sources and causes of fiction. Even the brief charms chanted by the peasant

¹ *English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest*, p. 41.

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when he was sowing or reaping often contained hints of legends or bits of plot pregnant with imagination and dramatic possibilities. The tribal medicine-man, in his efforts to cure the patient, shook his shield above the diseased man and sang defiantly to the witch-maidens, the valkyrie:

Loud were they, lo! loud, as over the land they rode;
Fierce of heart were they, as over the hill they rode!
Shield thee now thyself, from their spite thou may'st escape
thee.

Out, little spear, if herein thou be!
Underneath the linden stand I, underneath the shining shield,
For the might maidens have mustered up their strength,
And have sent their spear screaming through the air!
Back again to them will I send another,
Arrow forth a-flying from the front against them!

Out, little spear, if herein thou be!

And even the riddles that came in a later day were frequently in a story form; as when the moon is represented as a young warrior hurrying with stolen treasure to his castle, the sun pursuing, and the night stealing upon the sun and destroying him. Long ago, then, our forefathers realized the joy of a creative imagination.

WIDSITH

One of the earliest bits of fiction now existing—perhaps the oldest in any Germanic language—is the fragment known as *Widsith* (*Far Away* or the *Far Traveller*). Found in a manuscript volume, the *Exeter Book*, presented to Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofric in 1071, the present form of this story of travel is doubtless a recast of some ancient lines sung probably as

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early as A. D. 400. True, it contains names of monarchs who lived as late as 520; but these, it would appear, could easily have been added from century to century by new singers. The harpist tells of his far journeys, of the kings and nations he has met, and of how he has fired their ambition by his glorious songs of their deeds. "Widsith told his story; he unlocked his word-hoard,—he who of all men had seen the most kindreds and nations, and who for his singing often received gifts in the hall."

Thus I traveled through strange lands and learnt
Of good and evil in the spacious world;
Parted from home-friends and dear kindred, far
The ways I followed. Therefore I can sing
And tell a tale, recount in the Mead Hall
How men of high race gave gifts to me.

.
When I and Skilling for our conquering Lord,
With clear voice raised the song loud to the harp,
The sound was music; many a stately man,
Who well knew what was right, then said in words
That never had they heard a happier song.

.
So have I ever found in journeying
That he is to the dwellers in a land
The dearest, to whom God gives, while he lives
Here upon earth, to hold rule over men.
Thus wandering, they who shape songs for men
Pass over many lands, and tell their need,
And speak their thanks, and ever, south or north,
Meet someone skilled in songs and free in gifts,
Who would be raised among his friends to fame
And do brave deeds till light and life are gone.
He who has thus wrought himself praise shall have
A settled glory underneath the stars.

ENGLISH FICTION

Thus even in our oldest bit of story we find those traits that have been characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon at his best: personal bravery, the traveling instinct, hospitality, liberality, and an irrepressible craving for a fame that will carry his name down through the ages. The story itself is but ordinary—the brief and partly imaginary account of a wanderer's wayfaring—but as a character sketch it has a tone of sincerity and an enthusiasm that are admirable.

BEOWULF

Doubtless the greatest story that these wandering gleemen chanted was the famous epic, *Beowulf*. As a tale of heroic deeds it has seldom been surpassed in the world's literature, and to this day, when phrased in modern language, it never fails to grip the interest of a popular audience. When it was first sung we shall never be able to tell. Although the manuscript of it, first published in 1815 by a Danish scholar, Thorkelin, was written probably about 950, the story itself was told in part as early as 450, and probably had reached a fairly complete form by 600. It is by far the oldest existing epic in any Germanic language, and in the characteristics of its principal hero the noblest of them all.

Here we find the ideal of Anglo-Saxon manhood, and centering about him a mass of vigorous fiction sufficient for several modern novels of the most strenuous type. The tale opens with an account of the ancestry of Hrothgar, the king of the Danes, one of whose forefathers was Scyld, the tribal teacher of agriculture, who, as a babe, had been found sleeping on a sheaf

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of grain in a boat floating toward the shore. And just here is a legend ancient of days. Moses was found in a grass-lined boat; Arthur is said to have come in a boat from "over the waters," and at his death mysterious women took his body in a barge out into the dark sea. Now, Hrothgar built a banquet-hall, a vast "mead-hall," where he and his warriors might feast after their victories. It was called "Heorot" because at either end hart or deer antlers thrust forth from the gables. Here many a drinking bout was held, and the minstrel's harp rang loudly. But far down in the swampy depths of the forest lived a monster, Grendel, a hater of mankind, "divided from all joy," and he, loathing the sound of pleasant revelry, determined in direful mood to destroy those that sang so heartily in the mighty banquet-room. Then through the darkness he came creeping under the moonlit fog, burst open the iron-bound door, and devoured many a sleeping warrior, and stalked away to his den, singing in gleeful triumph. All was desolation in the kingdom of Hrothgar; the broad feast-hall was deserted; there was neither wish nor place for revelry.

In another land, the kingdom of Hygelac, the chief of the Geats, lived a youthful warrior of marvelous strength. His name was Beowulf. Hearing of the despair of Hrothgar, he went down to sea with his men and sailed to the troubled kingdom. Many are the Anglo-Saxon customs now described; the story is a treasure-house for the historian of early English life. Beowulf is met on the shore by a guard who inquires his business, praises his manly bearing, and then leads him to the village. As they approach they see from

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the top of a cliff the metal roof of Heorot glittering under the sun, the little group of village homes, the narrow strip of cultivated land beyond, and then the gloomy forest sweeping on to the horizon. The guests thrust their spears into the ground before the hall—for no armed visitor might enter the Anglo-Saxon home—and Hrothgar welcomes them with stately speech. Then there is feasting, and gifts are exchanged, and Beowulf boasts of what he shall do when he meets the monster.

Now comes the night. Hrothgar's men leave the hall; Beowulf and his warriors lie in sleep on the floor.

Then from the moor under the shroud of mist,
Came Grendel striding. Wrath of God he bore.
Scather of men, he thought in the high hall
To snare one of man's race. Shrouded he went
Till he saw clearly the gold-hall of men,
The wine-house, gay with cups; nor then first sought
The home of Hrothgar. . . .
. . . Journeying to the house
Came then the being divided from all joys;
Quickly he rushed upon the door made fast
With hands fire-hardened; with his hands broke through,
For he was swollen with rage—through the house's mouth.
Then soon upon the many-colored floor
The foe trod; on he went with ireful mood,
Came from his eyes a fierce light likest fire.
He saw within the hall a kindred band
Of many men asleep, a company
Of comrades all together; then he laughed.
. . . Nor meant the wretch
Delay, for at the first he swiftly seized
A sleeper, slit him unaware, bit through
His bone-case, from his veins drank blood, and soon
Swallowing in large lumps, had eaten all

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The dead man, feet and hands. Then nearer, forth
He stepped, laid hands on the stout-hearted chief
Upon his couch; with his hand the foe
Reached toward him. He instantly grappled
With the evil-minded, and on his arm rested.

Then when the fiend realized that never "had he
found a stronger hand-grip," his mind grew fearful
and he longed to be away. But he might not. The
hand of Beowulf, crushing his fingers, held him fast.

The princely hall thundered; terror was
On all the Danes, the city-dwellers,
Each valiant one, while both the fierce
Strong warriors raged; the mansion resounded.

.
Not for aught would this saviour of earls
Leave alive the deadly guest;
The days of his life he counted not useful
To any folk. . . .

.
He that was God's foe found that his body failed
To serve him, because Hygelac's bold kinsman
Had him in hand. . . .

. . . A deadly wound
Appeared on his shoulder, his sinews snapped,
His bone-casings burst. Glory of battle
Was to Beowulf given. Grendel must thence,
Death-sick, to his fen-shades flee,
Seek his sad home, well knowing that the end of life
Was come, the number of his days past.

This, then, is the first episode of the story. There
is feasting the next day; Beowulf is laden with gifts;
the queen brings her son to receive his advice; he is
admired of all. The banquet continues into the night;
and then Beowulf and his men, going out into the vil-

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lage to sleep, leave the hall to Hrothgar's men. But now from the darkness of the forest comes Grendel's mother, wild for revenge. Hideous is she—shaggy, mad-eyed, tortured with hatred.

The woman-demon remembered her misery,
She that the watery horrors, the cold streams,
Had to inhabit. . . .
So came she to Heorot, to where the king Danes
Throughout the hall slept. . . .
Then in the hall the hard edge was drawn,
The sword o'er the seats, many a broad shield
Lifted firm in hand. . . .
One of the nobles she quickly had
With grip fast seized, as she went to the fen,
.
A mighty shield-warrior whom she killed,
A hero renowned.

In the morning came Beowulf wishing his host happiness. "Alas," exclaimed Hrothgar,

"Ask not after happiness! Grief is renewed
To the folk of the Danes."

Enraged by the tale of horror that follows, Beowulf determines to go down into the watery cavern where the demon-mother lives, and there attack her. Sadly his men follow him to the edge of the lake or ocean inlet, where the water is so dark and loathsome that the deer pursued by the dogs lies down to be devoured rather than swim across. Beowulf plunges in, and, among horrid monsters of the deep, sinks to the bottom. As he nears the sandy floor, a great, hairy arm reaches out and snatches him into the cavern. Then is a mighty battle fought. All day they struggle; but even the

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hero's vast strength proves unable to destroy the sinewy fiend.

On her head his ringed brand sang
A horrid war-song.

But his trusted sword failed him in this time of dire need; he despaired of life.

Then he saw 'mongst the arms a victorious falchion,
An old jotun-sword, of edges doughty,
The glory of warriors . . . the work of giants.
The knotted hilt seized he, the Scyldings' warrior—
Fierce and deadly grim, the ringed sword swung.
Despairing of life, he angrily struck,
That 'gainst her neck it griped her hard,
Her bone-rings broke. Through her fated carcass
The falchion passed; on the ground she sank;
The blade was gory; the man joy'd in his work.

Back to outer air, back to Heorot the hero goes in triumph. His ship is filled with gifts. Glorious in fame, he sails away to the land of the Geats, the kingdom of Hygelac. Thus ends the second episode.

Sixty years now pass, and Beowulf is in his eightieth year. The day of his last struggle against evil is at hand. He has ruled the Geats more than fifty years, and he is the admiration and fear of all his neighbors. In ancient days another people had lived in this land—a people who had all perished under some devouring scourge, and their prince, before he laid him down to die, had hidden the nation's treasures in a mound. This heap of gold a fire-breathing dragon had found, and day by day watched over it in a deep cavern. One morning a peasant discovered the treasure while

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the dragon was away, and stole a golden cup from the heap. Then the dragon, in his rage, went forth upon the land, breathed flame upon field and village, and brought sorrow to all the folk of Beowulf.

Like a true Anglo-Saxon monarch, Beowulf, old as he is, feels it his duty to go out against the monster. Thus the third episode begins. Beowulf approaches the mouth of the cavern; at the sight of the dragon all the warriors save the young kinsman, Wiglaf, flee; and there with their backs to the wall and a great iron shield before them, the old man and the boy fight the enemy of their country. The victory is theirs; but Beowulf has breathed the poisonous flames of the dragon, and death is at hand. He bids the boy bring forth the treasure, and, as he looks upon it, he tells the course of his life. Then cries he, "I thank the glorious King that ere I die I have won these things for my people; have paid my old life for them." Then, with true Anglo-Saxon longing for remembrance after death, he whispers:

Bid the battle-famed build a barrow high,
Clear to see when bale is burnt, on the bluffs above the surge,
Thus it may for folk of mine, for remembering of me,
Lift on high its head, on the height of Hronesnaes;
So that soon sea-sailing men, in succeeding days,
Call it Beowulf's Barrow; when their barks a-foam,
From afar they make their way through the mists of Ocean.

Thus died he,

Of all men the mildest, and to men the kindest,
To his people gentlest, and of praise the keenest.

How many things of interest might be told of this ancient narrative! Although greatly changed and cut

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by the Christian priests who wrote it down in the tenth century, it still retains its wild, heathen tone and much of the history and tradition of our distant forefathers. A warrior named Beowulf really lived, was a Geat, and the son of a chief, Hygelac, who, according to Gregory of Tours, raided the Frisian shore about 520. The Franks pursued and killed him, and Beowulf avenged his death. That he reigned fifty years after his father is perhaps true. Mere human heroism, however, did not suffice for his glorification; the deeds of the ancient god of sun and summer, Beowa, were transferred to him, and before the story had been brought to England by the Angles he was a creature half divine. It was in England about 650 that the epic reached its full proportions; for there and then the stories of Scyld and of Grendel's mother were added, and doubtless many other hints or portions of ancient tales inserted. In fact, there are several fragments of legends in *Beowulf* much older than the epic itself. There is, for instance, the hoary fragment about the Battle of Finnsburg. Finn, to bring peace, marries Hildeburh, daughter of Hoc, the Dane. Her kinsmen, Hnaef and Hengist, with sixty men, come on a visit; but Finn, with old anger rankling in him, sets fire to the guest-hall. A bit of another manuscript, still preserved, takes up the story at this point. Hnaef raises the alarm:

This no eastward dawning is, nor is here a dragon flying,
Nor of this high hall are the horns a-burning;
But the foe is rushing here! Now the ravens sing;
Growling is the gray wolf; grim the war-wood rattles;
Shield to shaft is answering! . . .
Now awaken, rouse ye, men of war of mine,

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Ready have your hands, think on hero deeds,
In the front be fighting, be of fiery mood.

The fight continues five days; Hnaef is slain, and many of his warriors. Here the portion quoted in *Beowulf* begins. Nearly all of Finn's comrades, including his young son, have been killed, and a temporary peace is made. But later Finn secretly causes the death of Hengist, and in revenge the dead man's friends return, kill Finn, and take Hildeburh back to her people.

It is such fiction as this that delighted the Saxon heart, and the composers of *Beowulf*, knowing this, hinted at or even quoted as many of the ancient legends as they were familiar with. The story of Widsith was brought to mind; the myth of Scyld was mentioned; the legend of a swimming match between Beowulf and Brecca was a familiar representation of the struggle between summer and winter; the story of Sigmund's battle with the dragon, out of which grew the Siegfried saga, warmed the hearts of the rough listeners; the prince's-treasure tradition was known to the people three centuries before the story of Beowulf himself.

Thus traditions and legends, added from time to time, made the story dearer to those in the ale-hall, because it retold those deeds which the rough warriors had heard, as children, from the lips of aged sires.

But what of the construction, the plot, the characters of this ancient piece of fiction? The story is loosely connected, it must be admitted; the three episodes did not *have* to occur in this way or this order in the life of the hero. There is entirely too much digression to suit modern readers; the characters undoubtedly talk

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too much; from the story-teller's standpoint, but not from the historian's, too many details are given. But these faults admitted, it is certain that each episode has a vigor, a rapidity of movement, a savage vehemence truly dramatic. The actions stand out clearly; we see without effort the monster and Beowulf clashing in the swaying hall; we hear the crunching of bones; we feel the tearing of sinews; we touch, with the hero, the horrible creatures in the dark lake; and the fire-breathing dragon becomes a reality. These phases are unconscious victories in art. Then, too, the story is true to its nationality. The boastfulness and abruptness of speech, the decisiveness in action, the dignity of bearing, the vast physical vigor, the deep belief in fate, the disregard for life, the ever-present sense of gloom in spite of the feasting and song—these instantly impress us as not affected, but entirely natural. The story is defective, perhaps, in that only one character is given opportunity to shine—no one is allowed to compare with Beowulf—but, then, even in this primitive narrative the hero shows one trait almost demanded in the figures of the modern novel; that is, *soul development*. Beowulf in his old age is even more admirable than Beowulf in his youth. He is gentler; he is graver; he boasts less; he depends more upon actual deeds; he lives more for others than for himself; experience has made him wise and has sweetened his soul. All in all we have here a remarkable piece of fiction to come from a primitive, totally unread race, and we should not wonder that the deep human craving for narrative so long found joy in it and that the child of to-day, like

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the early Saxon, listens with intense interest to its vivid account.

DEOR'S COMPLAINT

I have said that numerous old poems are mentioned in *Beowulf*. Among them is a short story of an unfortunate harper—a few mournful lines entitled *The Complaint of Deor*. Long had Deor been the darling of the feast-hall; for none had ever equaled him in song. Gifts were his, lands and honors. Then came a rival, Heorrenda, who by his skill in music won away the chief's admiration and love, and Deor went forth, a wanderer and a beggar. He tells of the troubles of other men—of Weland, who was exiled and had for companions "sorrow and longing, the winter's cold sting, woe upon woe"; of Theodoric, a prisoner for thirty years; of the Goths, who had been persecuted by tyrants. Then he speaks of himself:

Now of myself this will I say:
Erewhile I was Scop of the Heodenings,
Dear to my Lord. Deor my name was.
A many winters I knew good service;
Gracious was my lord. But now Heorrenda,
By craft of his singing, succeeds to the land-right
That Guardian of Men erst gave unto me.

That was o'er-passed; this may pass also.

About this venerable lay we can know little. It may have been sung to draw greater gifts from some sympathetic chief; it may have been created by some artistic minstrel simply to answer the Anglo-Saxon affection for a pathetic theme; whatever its cause, it is a *conscious* production and doubtless almost entirely fic-

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titious. Says Stopford Brooke concerning it: "Its form is remarkable. It has a refrain, and there is no other early English instance of this known to us. It is written in strophes, and one motive, constant throughout, is expressed in the refrain. This dominant cry of passion makes the poem a true lyric, . . . the Father of all English lyrics. . . . The comfort is stern, like that the Northmen take." It is but another proof of the willingness of our forefathers to listen to any story, whether long or short, exultant or sorrowful,—just so it told the story of physical, mental, or moral struggle.

THE WANDERER

Of just such a reminiscent character is another probably pre-Christian fiction, *The Wanderer*. Here the ancient harpist speaks again, unlocks his hoard of memories, tells of the friends now long dead, of the glee in the old-time mead-hall, and of the loneliness and care that are his to-day:

So it happened that I—oft-unhappy me!
Far from friendly kinsmen, forced away from home—
Had to seal securely all my secret soul,
After that my Gold-friend in the gone-by years
Darkness of the earth bedecked. Dreary-hearted, from that time,
Went I, winter-wretched, o'er the woven waves of the sea,
Searching, sorrow-smitten, for some Treasure-spender's hall,
Where, or far or near, I might find a man
Who, amidst the mead-halls, might acquainted be with love,
Or to me, the friendless, fain would comfort give,
Pleasure me with pleasures.

He who proves it, knows
What a cruel comrade careful sorrow is to him,
Who in life but little store of loved companions has!

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His the track of exile is, not the twisted gold,
His the frozen bosom, not the earth's fertility!

Then the minstrel tells of the loud joy in the halls
of his youth, how now he drifts over the dark ocean,
with "the falling sleet and snow sifted through with
hail," and how he is lost in wonder at the fleetingness
of all things here on earth.

Whither went the horse, whither went the man? Whither went
the Treasure-giver?

What befell the seats of feasting? Whither fled the joys in
hall?

Alas! the beaker bright! Alas! the byrnie warriors!

Alas! the people's pride! Oh, how perished is that time!

Veiled beneath night's helm it is, as if it ne'er had been!

Then come the closing lines speaking the same conclusion
as that later singer who had lived and suffered,
Shakespeare, when he exclaimed as the epitome of his
life's observations—

We are such stuff as dreams are made on
And our little life is rounded with a sleep.

Says the wanderer, as he sums up the experience of
an existence knowing both joy and sorrow:

All is trouble, all this realm of earth!
Doom of weirds is changing all the world below the skies;
Here our fee is fleeting, here the friend is fleeting,
Fleeting here is man, fleeting is the woman,
All the earth's foundation is an idle thing become.

Again we find the melancholy strain so long characteristic
of the Anglo-Saxon race. Again, too, we hear the "travel story,"
the type that is popular to this day. The same virtues are
set forth, though in briefer form,

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as are emphasized in *Beowulf*, and the same impelling belief in Fate, in the inexorable will of Wyrd, or the will of God. Nowhere yet has love of woman entered as a theme for story; it is a day of man-fiction, when combat with wild nature and unswerving predestination is the subject that moves the spirit.

THE SEAFARER

The Seafarer, another story found in the *Exeter Book* already mentioned, is probably of later origin than *Widsith*, the *Complaint of Deor*, and similar tales thus far mentioned. By this time, perhaps after Christianity had begun its work in England, the Anglo-Saxons had settled down on land, had become true "land lubbers," often fearful of the sea and its wild storms. Perhaps, too, some touch of Christianity had come to the particular author of this fiction, softening his nature and making him a lover more of quiet meditation than of physical activities. The narrative is practically a dialogue between an old man and a youth—one of the first conversational stories, if not the first, in Germanic languages. "I can tell," exclaims the old fellow,

How oft through long seasons I suffered and strove,
Abiding within my breast bitterest care;
How I sailed among sorrows in many a sea;
The wild rise of the waves, the close watch of the night
At the dark prow in danger of dashing on rock,
Folded in by the frost, my feet bound by the cold
In chill bands, in the breast the heart burning with care,
The soul of the sea-weary hunger assailed.
Knows not he who finds happiest hours upon earth
How I lived through long winter in labor and care,
On the icy-cold ocean, an exile from joy,
Cut off from dear kindred, encompassed with ice.

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Hail flew in hard showers, and nothing I heard
But the wrath of the waters, the icy-cold way.

But the young man's longing is not changed by the dreary description. "Ah," he cries:

A passion of the mind every moment pricks me on
All my life to set a-faring; so that far from hence
I may seek the shore of the strange outlanders.

"Yes," replies the old sailor, "it is ever so with youth." Not content with well enough, not satisfied with the work that Fate has set clearly before him, not joying in domestic peace, he feels no delight

In anything whatever save the tossing o'er the waves!
O for ever he has longing who is urged toward the sea.

Then the young man, protesting, points toward the spring scene about him, "the trees reblooming," the "winsome, wide plains," the "gay world," and declares that

All doth only challenge the impassioned heart
Of his courage to the voyage, whosoever thus bethinks him
O'er the billows far away to go.

Suddenly the cuckoo calls from a neighboring wood, and the old man, as a final warning, declares that it is singing the sorrow it knows,—the sorrow of

What the wanderer endures
Who his paths of banishment widest places on the sea.

But the boy will have none of it; the call of the sea is in his ears; he must away. "Behold!" he cries,

My thought hovers now above my heart;
Over the surging flood of sea now my spirit flies,

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O'er the homeland of the whale—hovers then afar
O'er the foldings of the earth!

It is the old, old story—the young Englishman's madness for the sea, the *wanderlust* of youth, the longing of the Anglo-Saxon to go forth, see, and conquer. Christianity may have brought in the touches of Nature-love and the tinge of gentler sentiment; but the ancient savage spirit is still there—the fighting, daring spirit that made a Nelson and a Wellington.

These, then, are examples of our pagan forefathers' first rough attempts to tell a tale. Of love of woman—the main subject in modern fiction—there is scarcely a mention; of deeds of gentleness little is said; the battle-din, the rush of ocean waves, the dire struggle with Nature, the gift-givers in the banquet-hall, the loneliness of old age, the dreams of a brave past—these are the themes that inspired the minstrel, as in the cool of the morning he paced back and forward along the village green, composing the song for the night, and these the themes that at the evening feast brought the shouting warriors to their feet, or, mayhap, caused their shaggy heads to bow in sympathetic anguish. It was a splendid beginning—this poetry-fiction of strong manhood and physically brave ideals—a kind of literature entirely different from the stories of sexual longing and love intrigues so frequently discovered in the early lore of the more southern nations. We should indeed be thankful that our ancestors loved to hear in their songs, of the soul

Who would be raised among his friends to fame,
And do brave deeds till light and life are gone.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLIEST FICTION OF CHRISTIAN ENGLAND

IN the previous study of the beginning of English Fiction I endeavored to make plain the longing of our heathen ancestors for stories and legends, and I endeavored also to show the character of fiction they demanded. We found that the principal figure had to be a physical hero, a man mighty in strength, powerful as a leader, clean of life, fearless, decisive, liberal, aspiring to fame. Gentleness was not an essential trait, though sometimes attributed to the character. Battle was the theme, and war was his occupation. The forest, the waters, and the things of Nature in general were enemies, elements to be feared, hated, and vanquished. Virility and not love was the motive or theme of all narrative.

CHRISTIAN CHANGES

Now, with the coming of Christian missionaries in 597, certain aspects of old English fiction began to undergo a decided change. Latin literature and the Bible, with their gentler touches, affected the national character; teachers from among the Irish, who had before this become converts to Christianity, entered with their Celtic sentiment and lyrical love of Nature; and the Anglo-Saxon, without at once losing his native sturdi-

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ness, stubbornness, and bravery, acquired in addition a susceptibility to the lovable things of field and forest, and a meditateness, a considerateness, and a sweetness of spirit not known to his pagan ancestors. Strange to say, his native tinge of fatalism, or pessimism, did not disappear under the new religion, but, instead, developed at times among the writers into almost a melancholia. Wyrd, the former all-conquering Fate, which had made them so reckless in battle, now became the unchanging Will of God; and fatalism of the most flagrant character tinged their songs and stories. But the gentleness, the devout enthusiasm for noble and bold things, the love for all God's creatures, the desire for legends of divine or mortal affection and sacrifice—these phases readily mark a change of attitude among the writers of early Christian England.

CÆDMON

The tradition concerning the first Christian poet and story-teller of the nation is one so calm, so lovely, and so tender that it might never have appealed to the rough chiefs of the Thor and Woden era. It is the story of Cædmon (630?–680?), the earliest known British poet. Bede, the first prominent prose-writer of the race, tells the legend in his famous *Ecclesiastical History of England*, written before 735. "Cædmon," he says, "was a brother in the monastery, especially distinguished by divine grace, for he used to make songs apt to religion and piety; so that, whatever he learnt through the interpreters of Holy Writ, this he, after a little while, composed in poetical words, and, with the utmost sweetness and feeling, would produce in his own

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English tongue. . . . He was a layman until of mature age and had never learnt any songs. Sometimes, therefore, at a feast, when for the sake of entertainment, all would sing in their turn, he, seeing the harp coming near him, rose from the table and went home. Once, having left the house of festivity, he went out to the stable of the beasts, care of which was entrusted to him that night, and there, when he had fallen asleep, a form stood by him, saluted him, and called him by name. 'Cædmon, sing me something.' 'I cannot sing,' said he; 'I have come away from the feast because I could not sing.' Then commanded the other, 'But you shall sing to me.' 'What shall I sing?' said Cædmon, and the being answered, 'Sing me the origin of all things.' When he received this answer then he began to sing immediately, in praise of God, the Creator, the verses which he had never heard, the order of which is thus:

Now must we praise the Guardian of heaven's kingdom,
The Creator's might and His mind's thought;
Glorious Father of men! How of every wonder he,
Lord eternal, formed the beginning.

He first formed for the children of earth
The heaven as a roof—holy Creator!—
Then the middle-earth, this Ward of mankind,
The Lord eternal, and then let arise
The world for men—the Almighty God!

Besides composing the hymn of creation quoted above, Cædmon undoubtedly paraphrased portions of *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Daniel*, and several parts of the New Testament, especially those dealing with the temptation, crucifixion, ascension, and judgment of Christ. The

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parchment containing these poetical stories attributed to him, and known as the Junian manuscript because once in the possession of Junius (Francis du Jon), a Leyden scholar of the seventeenth century, was written in the tenth century and shows at least two styles of authorship—styles so different that in even the first poem itself, *Genesis*, scholars find the work of two authors and therefore divide the story into *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*. The first, and perhaps original, part extends to line 234 and then is interrupted by *Genesis B* until line 852.

Both versions take up the old legend of the Fall of Man, and in the first portions the unlearned Saxon poet reaches at times a sublimity almost excelling that of Milton's mighty epic upon the same subject. The proud angels in Heaven, so the tale begins, strove with God for possession of the universe; but the Almighty, "stern and grim," seized them and "crushed them in his grasp." God, however, was in anguish because of the vacant places in His Paradise and when He looked forth into the Vast He found but emptiness.

Nor was here as yet, save a hollow shadow,
Anything created; but the wide abyss,
Deep and dim, outspread; all divided from the Lord,
Idle and unuseful. With His eyes upon it
Gazed the mighty-minded King, and He marked the place
Lie delightless—(looked and) saw the cloud
Brooding black in Ever-night, swart beneath the heavens,
Wan and wasteful all, till the world became.
Then the ever-living Lord at the first created—
He the Helm of every wight—Heaven and the Earth;
Reared aloft the Firmament, and this roomful land
Stablished steadfast there.

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Then the story tells of the creation of man, of God's joy over His handiwork, and of the beautiful home where the first couple dwelt.

Fair washed
The genial land the running water,
The well-brook: no clouds as yet
Over the ample ground bore rains
Lowering with wind; yet with fruits stood
Earth adorn'd. Held their outward course
River-streams, four nobile ones,
From the new Paradise.

As Stopford Brooke points out, there are numerous deserts of dull paraphrase in these works; but in those scenes that struck the sympathetic chord in the sea-loving, fight-loving Englishman, the poet's lyre becomes inspired and the lines sweep on with a rush and a torrent of picturesque phrases. Note, for instance, the fall of Satan:

One He had made so powerful,
So mighty in his mind's thought, he let him sway over so much
Highest after himself in heaven's kingdom. He had made him
so fair,
So beauteous was his form in heaven, that came to him from
the Lord of hosts,
He was like to the bright stars. It was his to work the praise
of the Lord;
It was his to hold dear his joys in heaven and to thank his Lord
For the reward that He had bestow'd on him in that light; then
had He let him long possess it;
But he turned it for himself to a worse thing, began to raise
war upon Him,
Against the highest Ruler of heaven, who sitteth in the holy seat.
.
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.
The fiend, with all his comrades, fell then from heaven above,
Through as long as three nights and days,

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The angels from heaven into hell, and them all the Lord
Transformed to devils, because they His deed and word
Would not revere. . . .

Then spake the haughty king
Who of angels erst was brightest,
Fairest in heaven: . . .
"This narrow place is most unlike
That other that we ere knew.
High in heaven's kingdom, which my master bestow'd on me.
. . . Oh, had I power of my hands
And might one season be without,
Be one winter's space, then with this host I—
But around me lie iron bonds,
Presseth this cord of chain: I am powerless!

Thus the story continues, with God and Satan acting and speaking like early Saxon chiefs and the main events pictured with English environments. So it is with the second of the Cædmonian paraphrases; here, however, the story-teller, in his efforts to make the tale clear and vivid to Anglo-Saxon minds, takes great liberties with the Biblical text, and sweeps the narrative along with an energy that would quite delight the heart of an editor of a modern fiction magazine. See the drowning of Pharaoh and his army:

The folk was affrighted, the flood-dread seized on
Their sad souls; ocean wailed with death,
The mountain heights were with blood bestreamed,
The sea foamed gore, crying was in the waves,
The water full of weapons, a death mist rose;
The Egyptians were turned back;
Trembling they fled, they felt fear;
That host would gladly find their homes;
Their vaunt grew sadder; against them, as a cloud, rose
The fell rolling of the waves. . . .

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. . . Their might was merged;
The streams stood, the storm rose
High in heaven; the loudest army-cry
The hostile uttered; the air above was thickened
With dying voices; blood pervaded the flood,
The shield-walls were riven, shook the firmament
That greatest of sea-deaths; the proud died.

It is this power of visualizing that marks the great story-teller. Cædmon saw clearly, felt keenly, and joyed and suffered with his heroes, and the result is a vividness admirable even in this day of studied, artistic phrasing. This same quality is evident in the other poetry-fiction attributed to him—his *Harrowing of Hell*, in which Christ, like the young Anglo-Saxon hero, shatters the gates of Hell, and bursts in upon Satan and the demons; his stories of the *Resurrection*, the *Ascension*, the *Day of Judgment*, in which the Saviour, more a strong-willed warrior than a gentle shepherd, meets death with a stoic manner born of fatalism, and enters into His own like a Saxon chief returning to his home after a victorious raid. As Stopford Brooke says, "it is by His being the great warrior that he becomes the great Saviour."¹ Christianity had not yet suppressed the demand that the leader in any narrative must be physically strong and physically brave. To quote again from Brooke: "In the *Vision of the Rood* (possibly of Cædmonian authorship), the young Hero girded himself for the battle. He was almighty God, strong and high-hearted, and he stepped upon the lofty gallows, brave of soul in the sight of many, for he would save

¹ *English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest*, p. 101.

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mankind. . . . Sore weary he was when the mickle strife was done, and the men laid him low, him the Lord of victory, in his grave, and the folk sang a lay of sorrow over him—as his comrades did for Beowulf. It is the death and burial of an English hero.”² The story-teller, Cædmon, born a heathen and dying a Christian, bridges the slight division between the heathen and the Christian fiction. He used the new material, but retained the old spirit; he sang of God and a nobler religion, but he made them both as English as he dared. Here we find the activity of a militant Christian, and the stories, rarely meditative, are extremely objective, telling only the hero’s adventures and seldom the joy or sorrow of the author.

From the story-telling view-point, there is doubtless, as in the heathen Anglo-Saxon works, too much digression; the narrator suffers from a surplus of imagination. But now, with the Biblical model before him, this Christian minstrel tells his tales with more unity, more coherence, more closely fitted and plausible sequence than did his predecessors. Fiction is advancing; the narrator is fully conscious of the climax of his plot; he converges his energies more directly upon it, and his vigorous characters and vigorous descriptions sweep confidently toward the final crisis. Gentler scenes there are, brief pauses for word-pictures too beautiful for earlier appreciation, rushing, lyrical verses of praise for this new God and His wonderful Saviour, touches of admiration for the sterner characteristics of womanhood; these are indeed new elements; but seldom does the

² *English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest*, p. 101.

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old savage love of wild vigor disappear for even a moment. The fiction-writer of those earlier Christian days in England had but changed the name of his ideal and not the nature; Beowulf is indeed silent, but the Anglo-Saxon Christ speaks in the same tone.

CYNEWULF

After the days of Cædmon, between 750 and 825, there lived a story-teller, who, in the art of making fiction seem real, surpassed all his predecessors. That man was Cynewulf. Strange as it may seem, for many centuries we did not know even the name of this creator of vivid narrative, although scholars felt that a certain group of poems of those old days must have come from one brain and one hand. In 1840 Jacob Grimm and J. M. Kemble, working absolutely independently, discovered in the runic letters of a poem, *Elene* (found in a manuscript of the Vercelli monastery, Italy), and in two poems of the *Exeter Book* the long-lost name of the singer. Little enough we know of his life. In the last lines of *Elene* he gives some brief reflections on his own days. He had been a minstrel, he declares, had taken prizes of gold, and then had known need and secret sorrow. "Yet he had had his joy; the radiance of youth had long ago been his." Stopford Brooke finds in the eighty-ninth *Riddle* of the poet another autobiographical hint; for there Cynewulf says: "Amid the folk I am famous. Loud applause rings through the hall when I sing to the rovers and the warriors, and I win glory in the towns, and glittering gold. Men of wit love to meet with me, for I unveil to them wis-

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dom. When I sing all men are silent. The dwellers on earth seek after me, but I often hide from them my path.”³ Again, he speaks of his sinful youth, of his repentant age, and of his watches in the silence of the night. It would seem, then, that this man had been a heathen of Northumbria in his young manhood, had been converted to Christianity, and had spent his mature years in some monastery composing poetical fictions concerning the deeds of his Saviour and that Saviour’s saints. Four stories are almost certainly his; for they contain his name—*Elene*, *Juliana*, *Crist*, and the *Fates of the Apostles*; while some scholars would attribute to him the narratives *Guthlac*, *Phœnix*, *Christ’s Descent into Hell*, *Andreas*, the *Dream of the Rood*, and others. Whoever he was, he was a genius in the vivid recounting of legendary lore, and whether he or a school of his disciples wrote the numerous poems assigned to him, the whole movement was a remarkable outburst of imaginative literature.

It would be impossible within the limits of this study of English fiction to discuss each and every one of these numerous works. Let us observe but a few in some little detail and thus gain an idea of the sort of narrative our British ancestors enjoyed immediately after Christianity had touched their souls. *Elene*, considered by most critics the best of Cynewulf’s poems, takes up the old legend of Constantine’s mother, Empress Helena, who after her conversion went forth in search of the true cross. The tradition is as old almost as Christianity itself and is found in the Latin *Life of St.*

³ Brooke’s *English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest*, p. 161.

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Quiriacus (Cyriacus), the Bishop of Jerusalem, who becomes the Judas of the story. The tale opens with a description of the power of Constantine:

Strong grew the ætheling's
Might 'neath the heavens. He was true king,
War-keeper of men. God him strengthened
With honor and might that to many became he
Throughout this earth to men a joy,
To nations a vengeance, when weapons he raised
Against his foes.

But at length mighty foes gather about him; "a host is gathered, folk of the Huns and fame-loving Goths"; and the march to battle begins. Then the strife-loving Anglo-Saxon blood of Cynewulf, Christian though he is, boils, and, like Beowulf of old, he sings the joys of war:

A war-song howled
The wolf in the wood, war-secret concealed not;
The dew-feathered eagle uplifted his song
On the trail of his foes. Hastened quickly
O'er cities of giants the greatest of war hosts
In bands to battle. . . .

Then rattled the shield,
The war-wood clanged: the king with host marched,
With army to battle. Aloft sang the raven,
Dark and corpse-greedy. The band was in motion.
The horn-bearers blew, the heralds called,
Steeds stamped the earth.

Then in the night a dream comes to Constantine—a vision of the cross shining brilliantly in the sky, and with the morrow victory comes to him. The story relates his conversion and his baptism, and then comes the main part of the narration. The mother, Helena, in

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er gratitude, determines to find the true cross, sets out on her journey, and at length arrives at Jerusalem. And what a journey that was! The old spirit of *Widith* and *Beowulf*, the old wild love for the tumultuous sea, burn anew; *Cynewulf* is once more for the moment a *Saxon*. See the bustle of departure:

Then the stallions of the flood
Stood alert for going, on the ocean-strand,
Hawsered steeds of sea, in the sound at anchor.

Over the sea-marges,
One troop after other, hourly urged they on.
So they stored up there—with the sarks of battle,
With shields and spears, with mail-shirted fighters,
With the warriors and the women—the wave-riding horses,
Their sea-steeds, steep of stem.

Blithe the sea-dogs were,
Courage in their heart! Glad the Queen was of her journey,
When at last to hithe, o'er the ocean-lake fast-rooted,
They had sailed their ships, set with rings on prows,
To the land of Greece. Then they let the keels
Stand upon the sea-marge, driven on the sandy shore,
Ancient houses of the wave.

Thus the ancient tale continues, now dull, now glowing, now a mere paraphrase of the Latin original, now a living fragment of lofty, imaginative poetry. *Helena* arrives at Jerusalem; she states her object to the Jews; *Judas*, who possesses valuable information concerning the cross, is delivered up to the empress, and is imprisoned until willing to tell these secrets; *Judas* leads the party to Calvary; a smoke arises showing where to dig; and three crosses are unearthed. Then comes the

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question as to which one is the Saviour's rood; but Judas finds the means for absolute certainty.

He bade them set (a) soul-less youth,
Deprived of life, the corpse on the earth,
The lifeless one, and up he raised,
Declarer of truth, two of the crosses,
. . . It was dead as before,
Corpse fast on its bier; the limbs were cold,
Clad in distress. Then was the third
Holy upraised. The body awaited
Until over it the ætheling's cross,
His rood, was upraised, Heaven-king's tree,
True token of victory. Immediately arose,
Ready in spirit, both together
Body and soul! There praise was uplifted
Fair 'mid the people.

The joyful word is sent back to Constantine; he orders a church built upon the spot; Judas is baptized, ordained Bishop of Jerusalem, and given the name Cyriacus; and the nails that pierced the limbs of Jesus are made into a bit for Constantine's war-horse. Then the narrative closes with the poet's epilogue, a quiet, half-sad, half-joyful bit of reflective verse.

Thus old and death-ready in this frail house
Word-craft I wove and wonderfully framed it,
Reflected at times and sifted my thought
Closely at night. I knew not well
This truth of the rood ere wider knowledge
Through glorious might into thought of my mind
Wisdom revealed to me.

For so primitive an age the plot of this story is remarkably steady. Uncertain, straggling portions there are, undeniably; but for the most part the narration

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proceeds unhesitatingly toward the scene on Calvary. Descriptions sometimes impede temporarily its course—descriptions such as those quoted of battle and sea-voyage; but they are not detrimental; they but heighten the vividness, the seeming reality of it all. Then, too, unlike *Beowulf*, more than one prominent figure passes before us: Helena, Constantine, and Judas stand forth as important actors, and their words and their deeds seem essential to the completeness of the tale. The legend as told by the artistic Cynewulf begins to take on some of the “inevitableness” of a modern plot; events, it seems, should have happened in just such a manner. It is a narrative vigorous, life-like, at times inspiring, at times intensely interesting—a virile Anglo-Saxon story in a new and hitherto almost untouched field.

His story, *Crist*, possesses almost equal merit. No hesitation here, no haziness of plot, no vagueness of character. The now fully Christianized author frequently rushes along with his narrative; when he stops it is but to burst forth in a song of prayer and praise to his God:

Come now, thou Lord of Victory, Creator of Mankind,
Make manifest Thy tenderness in mercy to us here!
Need is there for us all in Thee Thy Mother's kin to find,
Though to Thy Father's mystery we cannot yet come near.
Christ, Saviour, by Thy coming bless this earth of ours with love;
The golden gates, so long fast barred, do Thou, O Heavenly
King,
Bid now unclothe, that humbly Thou, descending from above,
Seek us on earth; for we have need of blessing Thou canst
bring.

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The descriptions of the fiery deluge in the Last Day, of the blazing and bloody cross reaching far into the skies, the trumpet-blasts of the four angels—these are but a few of the vivid touches that make this narration as intense and real as many of our modern masterpieces of short story.

The book opens with hymn-like prayers to God and praise that the Christ-child is born. The mother Mary appears, and then follows a conversation between her and some citizens of Jerusalem. Here, then, we have dialogue—one of the rare instances in early English fiction—dialogue, too, that bears some resemblance to that form of literature which is practically all conversation—the Drama. In the conversation later on between Joseph and Mary we have a selection that sounds very much like a fragment from a play almost modern in its tone. The husband accuses the wife of unfaithfulness.

Mary— Alas! Joseph mine, child of Jacob old,
Kinsman, thou of David, king of great fame,
In our fast-set friendship wilt thou fail me now?
Let my love be lost?

Joseph— Lo, now I
Deeply am distressed, all undone of honour.
. . . Oh, my sorrow! Oh, young girl!
Maid Maria!

Mary— Why bemoanest thou?
Criest now, care weary? Never crime in thee
Have I ever found; yet thou utterest words
As if thou thyself wert all thronged with sin!

With a woman's intuitive shrewdness, she turns the tables on him and makes him the defendant instead of

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the accuser. Thus the story proceeds, telling the old familiar narrative of the Christ, His birth, and His early life, and ever and anon bursting forth in choruses of lofty praise and thanksgiving.

The second part of the story deals with the ascension of Christ, who in it all is a warrior almost violent in His every act. As several critics have pointed out, doubtless the finest scene of this second portion is that showing the saints, whom the Saviour has released in his harrowing of Hell, following their Master to Heaven. The Heavenly inhabitants come forth to greet these old fighters for the faith, and the mighty leader of the angel army speaks like Beowulf of yore: "See, the Holy Hero has bereaved Hell, taken back the tribute. Lo, He returns after the war-playing, with his unnumbered folk set loose from prison. O ye gates, unclose; the King has come to His city! "

Now follows soon the story of the Day of Judgment, preceded, however, by some lines that in their cry of remorse, fear of the last accounting, and recognition of God's mercy, possess a most personal, human appeal:

Mickle is our need
That in this unfruitful time, ere that fearful dread
On our spirit's fairness, we should studiously bethink us!
Now most like it is as if we on lake of ocean,
O'er the water cold in our keels are sailing,
And through spacious sea, with our stallions of the Sound
Forward drive the flood-wood. Fearful is the stream
Of immeasurable surges that we sail on here,
Through this wavering world, through these windy oceans,
O'er the path profound. Perilous our state of life
Ere that we had sailed to the shore,
O'er the rough sea-ridges. Then there reached us help,

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That to hithe of Healing homeward led us on,
He, the Spirit-Son of God! And He dealt us grace,
So that we should be aware, from the vessel's deck,
Where our stallions of the sea we might stay with ropes,
Fast a-riding by their anchors—ancient horses of the wave!

Is it not a picturesque description of life's voyage? Here is the same ancient charm of the sea, here the same bold metaphors for ship and ocean, the beat of the waves against the bark, the foam of the surges, and with it all the deep Anglo-Saxon melancholy strain, only softened and made more patient by the help of a divine Pilot. Truly, Christianity had not destroyed the ancient foundation virtues, but simply had built its nobler structure upon them.

The third part of this piece of Anglo-Saxon fiction takes as its theme the Last Reckoning. Now the poet is in his native element; Wyrð is once more victorious; God, the destructive warrior, has let free His wrath. Hear and see that final hour:

All a-glow the Angels blow with one accord
Loudly thrilling trumpets. Trembles Middle-garth;
Earth is quaking under men! Right against the going
Of all the stars they sound together, strong and gloriously,
Sounding and resounding from the south and north;
On all creation, from the east and from the west;
Bairns of doughty men from the dead arousing,
All aghast from the gray mold; all the kin of men,
To the dooming of the Lord.

The world is on fire; "the Fire-blast, flaming far, fierce and hungry like a sword, whelms the world withal"; the mountains melt; the oceans boil; death fastens on man; the world shrivels like a scroll. All

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things perish—all save one. There against the murky sky stands the Cross, calm, unmoved, with its base rooted in Mount Zion and its head reaching into heaven. Without the sun, it shines afar; it is indeed the Rock of Ages. Thus with a burst of true Anglo-Saxon word-picturing the story of the Christ sweeps on to its close. This is a tale that would have brought the bold feasters of Widsith's day to their feet—one that would have caused them to brandish their swords aloft and shout undying allegiance to their Chief, the Warrior of Galilee. They might not have appreciated the tender passages that the new religion had given the legend; but the plot with its wild activity, the dangerous sea-voyage, the stormy harrowing of hell, the destruction of the world, and that mighty cross standing there amidst the tumult as the symbol of unchanging Wyrd, the Will of God—these things would have touched the native chord of heroism and idealism within their souls, and they would have praised with joy the minstrel whose art had made the song.

Ever and anon, however, despite the humanizing effects of Christianity, the old love of blood and strife breaks forth, and then the disciples of Jesus become warriors instead of teachers, and the saints shout a battle-cry that might have roused dragon-fighting Beowulf himself from the grave. Of such a nature is the story, *Judith*, sometimes attributed to Cynewulf, sometimes to Cædmon. Here are lust and carousal and drunkenness and virtuous womanhood and valiant war and treasure-giving and all those phases of song that roused the primitive Anglo-Saxon enthusiasm. The first nine cantos of this ancient fiction are lost; but the last three

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tell a vivid, yes, a violent tale. "We are placed," says Stopford Brooke, "in the midst of an eager life, in full sympathy with liberty, battle, and patriotism, with bold and heroic deeds. Judith is a fine creature, even finer than she is in the Apocrypha; and I do not doubt that there were many English women of the time capable of her warlike passion, and endowed with her lofty character."⁴

Holofernes and his guests carouse at a great banquet—a typical English banquet, by the way—and the "stark-minded man stormed and yelled, full of fierce mirth and mad with mead"—just like an English chief, again. Then he orders the Christian maiden, Judith, to be brought to his tent:

The famous then in mind
Was glad, the ruler of cities; he thought the beautiful maiden
With spot and stain to defile.

But the monster was "so drunk with wine" that he fell in sleep across his bed. Then the maiden, wrathful in soul, seized a sword, "wreathed-locked," and breathed a passionate prayer to the God of Purity:

Grant, Lord of Heaven, to me
Victory and faith without fear, that I with this sword may be
able
To hew down this dealer of murder; . . .
.
Avenge now, mighty Lord,
Glorious Giver of honor, that I am so angry in mind.

Then she seized him by his long hair, "struck then the hostile foe with shining sword" so that half through

⁴ *English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest*, p. 146.

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his neck was cut, and then a second time so that "his head rolled off on the floor," and his soul went "strongly enchained in the fire of hell." Thus early the woman's-honor *motif* has entered English fiction, and thus quickly was it disposed of in early days. With the same vivid picturing this story of Judith continues its course, relating how the lion-hearted woman, Saxon to the very core, rushes forth with the head of Holofernes, displays it to the people, exhorts the warriors, as did Joan of Arc, to fierce battle, and sees the Assyrians, panic-stricken, slain by the pursuing Hebrews. Then comes the gift-giving, without which no old English fiction would have been complete:

They brought for herself;
The spear-strong earls, of Holofernes
The sword and gory helm; likewise the byrnie broad,
Adorned with reddish gold, all that the warrior-chief,
The brave, of treasure had, or individual wealth,
Of rings and jewels bright; that to the lady fair
The wise in mind, gave they.

How such a story must have thrilled those Christianized Anglo-Saxons of the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries. Here was the strife of their fathers, the battle-cry of yore, the stalwart manhood, and the strong purity of womanhood that had won them victory in all struggles; it was but a bringing over of the old themes and old manners into the life and the fiction of the new and more enlightened era.

THE CHRONICLE

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* contains not a few of just such vigorous phases of narrative. This ancient his-

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torical account, probably begun at the request of King Alfred, tells the chief events of England's days from the coming of the Romans, B. C. 54, to the year 1154. A wonderful collection it is. Priest after priest, monk after monk, scholar after scholar wrote his brief commentary on the life that he knew, and in death handed the pen to his successor. Portions of the long story are dull enough, it must be admitted—dry descriptions of petty doings in monastic circles; but now and then a momentous event occurred, and then the scribe, thrilled with fear, surprise, or triumph, was lifted out of himself, and wrote as one inspired. Two of such noble pieces of narrative are the poems on the *Battle of Brunanburh* in 937 and the *Battle of Maldon* in 991. Here the old war-cry rings out again; here the love of combat bursts the bonds of three centuries of Christian teaching; here the British spirit speaks as it spoke in Macbeth:

Lay on, Macduff;
And damn'd be him that first cries, "Hold, enough!"

Lord Tennyson has modernized the famous story of Brunanburh and has caught surprisingly well the spirit, the rhythm, and the diction of the ancient ballad. Note the rapidity of movement, the flash and din of battle, the glory in victory:

Athelstan King, Lord among Earls,
Bracelet-bestower and Baron of Barons,
He with his brother, Edmund Atheling,
Gaining a lifelong glory in battle,
Slew with the sword-edge, there by Brunanburh,
Brake the shield-wall, hew'd the linden-wood,
Hack'd the battle-shield,
Sons of Edward with hammer'd brands.

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Theirs was a greatness got from their grandsires—
Theirs that so often in strife with their enemies
Struck for their boards and their hearths and their homes.

Bow'd the spoiler, bent the Scotsman,
Fell the ship-crews doom'd to the death.
All the field with the blood of the fighters
Flow'd from when first the great sun-star of morning-tide,
Lamp of the Lord God, Lord everlasting,
Glode over earth till the glorious creature
Sunk to his setting.

There lay many a man marr'd by the javelin,
Men of the Northland shot over shield.
There was the Scotsman weary of war.

We, the West Saxons, long as the daylight
Lasted, in companies
Troubled the track of the host that we hated,
Grimly with swords that were sharp from the grindstone,
Fiercely we hack'd at the flyers before us.

Many a carcass they left to be carrion;
Many a livid one, many a sallow-skin—
Left for the white-tail'd eagle to tear it, and
Left for the horny-nibb'd raven to rend it, and
Gave to the garbaging war-hawk to gorge it, and
That gray beast, the wolf of the weald.

That other story, the *Battle of Maldon*, which the historian, Freeman, declared as ranking "among the noblest efforts of Teutonic poetry," tells of the struggle of the Northumbrian earl, Birhtnoth, against the Vikings. Their leader, Olaf, vainly attempted to cross a wooden bridge guarded by the Saxon Wulfstan, and then crossing at a ford, met Birhtnoth in deadly strife. Birhtnoth is wounded, but slays his foe. Again he is wounded, and

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while he prays God to receive his soul, he is cut down by the enemy. Hear a few lines of the thrilling tale:

There was to the Vikings recompense given;
Heard I that one of them slew
Strongly with sword, stroke he withheld not,
That fell at his feet the fated warrior;
For that did his prince give thanks to him,
To his bower-thane, when he had season.
So firmly stood the fierce-in-mind,
The youths in fight, eagerly thought
Who there with his spear might soonest be able
From a fated man the life to win,
A warrior with weapons.

Then, as has been said, Birhtnoth received a mortal thrust:

In breast was he wounded
Through the ringed mail; there stood in his heart
The poisonous point. The earl was the gladder;
Laughed the proud man, to his Maker gave thanks
For the work of that day that the Lord him gave.

.
I thanks to Thee give, Ruler of nations,
For all those joys that on earth I experienced;
Now, Maker mild, most need have I
That Thou to my spirit the blessings grant,
That my soul to Thee may take its course,
Into Thy power, Prince of Angels,
With peace may go; I pray to thee
That fiends of Hell may not it harm.

There is a stern pathos in all this—a pathos so manly that it is above all taint of sentimentality. But there are foils to this sadness; our hatred of cowardice is aroused; the disgust of the strong-hearted is awakened. Godric, the Saxon, fled on the horse of his dead lord,

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and other cowards followed him. Some heroes, however, yet remain, and these waged the battle about the corpse of their master. "Then was there clashing of hields; the seamen strode forth, ireful in war. The spear often drove through the life-house of the doomed.

. . . The heroes sank down, weary with wounds." The old encouraged the young; the young cheered on the old; death reaped its harvest.

The manuscript ends here abruptly. The story of defeat is too plain to need further accounting. Who the author was we shall never know; but this we do know: that in his veins ran the old Saxon blood and that the scene of battle was secretly more fascinating than all the dusty manuscripts within the monastery walls.

It would seem that every writer of those ancient times loved the art of story-telling. King Alfred stopped in the midst of his translations from the Latin to thrust in the stories that travelers told him; the preachers in their *Homilies* held the dull audiences by means of animal fables, war-tales, and saints' lives. The man who could create vivid narrative was a power for righteousness, order, and the progress of civilization; he could command a hearing when all other speakers failed. The strength of the poet, the *scop*, was a very real strength; for his voice might fire the soul of the nation.

FOREIGN INFLUENCES

As, however, the tenth century drew to its close darkness hovered over England. The Danes, year by year, crept farther west and south; they conquered here and they mingled there; they loved not learning or books; they found no joy in the valiant stories of the Christ

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and His thanes. Imaginative literature all but died in the land; the poet was silenced; the story-teller wrote meagerly. Yet, in spite of the discouragement and desolation, some new narratives came among the people. Already Norman influence was showing itself in the island, and stories from Southern Europe—stories unlike the stern, wild tales of the Anglo-Saxon race, began to be popular. It was perhaps a sign of weakness, of degeneracy,—this acceptance of the foreign love-romance and this forgetting of the ballads that had roused the early sires.

APOLLONIUS

One specimen of this foreign literature will suffice—the Greek romance of Apollonius of Tyre, a sentimental love-story that had entered Northern Europe through the Latin and had been put into Anglo-Saxon about the year 1000. Apollonius, an accomplished, sentimental, melancholy, and, of course, handsome young gentleman, is shipwrecked in the land of Cyrene. He goes into the city gymnasium, pleases the king with his acrobatic tricks, is invited into the royal household, and meets the king's beautiful daughter who, of course, instantly falls in love with him. At the end of the first day he comes forth several hundred pounds of gold and silver ahead, and with the prospect of an early marriage in the neighborhood, and that prospect soon becomes a reality. Of course they lived happily ever afterwards.

This, then, was the change that was coming over the people. In Beowulf's day the warriors at the feast would probably have been disgusted with such an effeminate gush of romance and would have kicked the minstrel out

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of the hall. But now it was received and liked. Well for the English indeed that within another century a new race, the Norman-French, with a truer love for sentiment and yet with a bravery uncontaminated, should come among them with new and loftier ideals of life and literature.

CHAPTER III

THE FICTION OF NORMAN ENGLAND

It was in 888 that the Norse under Rollo besieged Paris, and it was almost exactly a quarter of a century later that his people gained that part of France now known as Normandy. These Northerners were quick to observe and learn, and before the close of the tenth century we find them so thoroughly incorporated into the life of France that none could accuse them of being less civilized, less cultured, less French than their neighbors to the south. Even their Norse language had disappeared, and in its place had come a speech largely of Latin foundation with but an element of the Danish remaining. Brave, romantic to some extent, alert, quick to imitate and absorb the better phases of the life about them, these people doubtless showed the most rapid transformation ever seen in Europe.

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These, then, were the invaders of England in 1066. Their customs, their ideals, their view of life, their example had, however, invaded the islands years before. The mother of the English king, Edward the Confessor, was a Norman; he himself had been educated in Normandy, and upon his coming to the throne he had placed the French stamp upon his court. He was surrounded

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by Norman courtiers; his priests were Norman; Norman-French was the favorite language in his halls; French literature was in his library; and Norman minstrels sang of French themes. Thus, when William came, he found at least the highest circles of English society prepared for him. Nor did this invader come without what he deemed good reasons. He was a relative of Edward's mother; he had been promised the kingdom by Edward; the Pope had sanctioned his claims; there was an English party that wished him to enter. He came, then, not as a rude, barbarous usurper, but as a strong and not unjust civilized monarch claiming his own.

The Britain that he found was rude enough. The vast forests were peopled by wild and often fierce animals. Along the coast broad sea-marshes stretched under the mist. Through marsh and forest mere trails served as highways, and only the roads that the Romans had built nearly a thousand years earlier offered a fair route for commerce. That commerce, confined almost entirely to hides, wool, skins, and agricultural produce, was generally meager enough in the summer and fall, but during the winter and spring was brought to a dead stand-still by the miserable condition of the paths of communication.

The people were as crude as their surroundings. Drunkenness and gluttony were national traits; isolation, ignorance, and suspicion hovered over all ideas and actions. A stranger was an object of fear or hatred; he must blow a horn or shout when approaching a house, or run the risk of being shot. Rough fights and feuds burst forth in every gathering of the com-

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mon people; blood-money was the penalty for murder; crime of a violent nature was most common. Surely the old Anglo-Saxon virtues of bravery, sturdiness, and independence had grown too ripe and had gone to seed.

The nation seems to have been divided into three classes, not so much through intellectual or cultural attainment as through cast of fortune. First came the earls or great land-owners, men whose ancestors had been leaders for centuries. Then came the churls or farm-workers, who might hold land of their own, but who were attached to the earl and his property, and were always included in the sale of the property. Last came the thralls, or slaves, men without property rights or suffrage, in many instances the descendants of the ancient Welsh whom the Saxons had overcome. The people were ignorant and unambitious. The monasteries with their broad lands and well-built houses were about the only centers of culture in vast areas, and served, in spite of their disobedience of church laws and their worldliness, to keep alive some intellectual life. There was no national language; three rather distinct dialects, the Northern, the Midland, and the Southern, contained a few books, most of which were unintelligible to readers of only one of these tongues.

William, coming among such conditions, did not attempt any sudden revolutions, but wisely left untouched the customs, the ideals, and the religion of the common folk. Naturally, however, tremendous changes took place. The three classes of British society were leveled into one, and the new castes consisted of but Normans and English. This, of course, injured the former aris-

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ocrats, but undoubtedly aided the lowest classes, who now found themselves on almost the same plane as their earlier masters. Perhaps the greatest results were the destruction forever of British isolation, the awakening of British intellect through the discipline of conquest and suffering, and the wider diffusion of the Celtic spirit through the more intimate relationship of the former Saxon nobles and the Welsh serfs. The institution of feudalism was far-reaching in its effect on architecture, social life, government, and war. More splendor appeared at court; the love of the pageant and festival was more evident; the refinements of manner, speech, and dress were revelations to the Saxons; the regard for the fine arts, the greater dignity of the continental Catholic Church, the interest in sentiment—all these meant education to the natives. The Normans were not remarkably original, but were greedy adopters; they were religiously inclined, but not highly moral; they were not so much creators as improvers of the romantic. To the British, therefore, they may not have brought so much the nobler qualities of strong, clean manhood, but they did indeed bring nimbleness, cheerfulness, brilliancy, and a facile and beautiful language. That language necessarily became the medium of court, parliament, bar, university, and church, but yet it did not thoroughly mingle itself with the vernacular for nearly three centuries. In 1258 royal proclamations were issued in Latin, French, and English; in 1302 English was spoken in the law courts; in 1340 Oxford students were required to talk Latin or French at their meals; until 1345 all school instruction was in French; in 1350 English practically ceased to absorb French;

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in 1363 the Chancellor opened Parliament with English; and between 1340 and 1400, the period of Chaucer's life, there was spoken and written a language having a large infusion of French, no doubt, but read without undue effort in our own day.

That was a brilliant period between 1100 and 1300, —a time of great events and great men. On both the continent and British soil the universities seemed to undergo a revival, and Bologna, Orleans, Montpellier, Paris, Salerno, Oxford, and Cambridge were crowded with zealous students. The Crusades gave a glamour to the day; splendid tournaments added picturesqueness; while fierce feuds between barons and kings brought out the sterner qualities of the races. Henry of Anjou destroyed eleven hundred castles in his campaigns, and depended upon the common folk for aid in such destructive work. Under King John (1272) the English and the Normans in England were united against the Normans in France, and a fierce patriotism once more burned in Great Britain. The deeply religious character of the Anglo-Saxon, with his sternness, fatalism, and stubbornness, had gained a tinge of romance from his own mythology, his lives of the saints, and the sufferings of his martyrs; while the Norman romances, with all their false loves and woman's frailty, had gained through their Holy Grail and general idealism, a deep strain of the religious. These two streams of literature—the romantically religious of the Anglo-Saxon and the religiously romantic of the Norman—running on the one hand from Orm in the thirteenth century to Langland and Wicliffe in the fourteenth, and on the other hand from Geoffrey and

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Layamon in the thirteenth to Chaucer in the fourteenth, gradually grew nearer and may be said to have converged at length early in the fifteenth century. Religion and romance no more were foes; they mingled to make the Arthurian legend and English romance and poetry in general the most nearly perfect of modern literatures.

NORMAN INFLUENCES

Under the Normans England was even more a land of story than it had been in the days of the Saxon scop. Indeed during the three centuries following the Conquest, all Europe seemed to become a nest of singing birds. The troubadours in Provence, the trouvères in France, the Minnesingers in Germany, the scaldic bards in Denmark, the harpers in Wales, the minstrels of the Anglo-Normans—all united to fill the world with song and legend. The Crusades had made anything believable. The people were not content to take history as it was; they stepped gladly from the prison of fact to the realm of fancy, and the land was filled with fantastic dreams.

The Anglo-Saxons could still point with some pride to their *Chronicle*, which was to continue until 1154; the scholars among both English and Normans wrote most credulous histories and chronicles in Latin; the court folk received their romances and lays in French; the common people about the tavern fire heard their rude ballads and tales in an English which was becoming daily more a mingling of Saxon and French. The Saxons had retained their ancient love for these things;

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the invading Danes had doubtless brought many a rough ballad; the Normans had now come with a new and more refined vein of legend.

THE MINSTRELS

The old gleeman who had sung the mighty Saxon songs in the chief's feast-hall was now gradually losing his prestige. A new and better type of minstrel came with the French, and the earlier type at length found its proper place in the hut and tavern kitchen.

Thus various classes of raconteurs came into existence—some high, some low, some singers in palaces, some in dirty dens of vice. Each gave what his audience demanded, and thus, incidentally, brought down the wrath of the Church upon the class as a whole. Augustine condemned giving to such wanderers, and the priests opposed them in every community. Between 1300 and 1325, however, the minstrels could be found in practically every home of high rank throughout England. They had a guild or union; they wore "union" badges; they had a fixed scale of wages; they knew their importance at every public occasion and profited by their knowledge. Everybody loved a minstrel, and no doubt in olden days all happy hearts sang with Adam Davy of the fourteenth century:

Merry it is in hall to hear the harp,
The minstrel sing, the jugglers carp.

As indicated above, however, by the close of the fourteenth century the minstrel was losing power, and by 1450 he was scarcely heard of in the better circles of society.

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But the story-telling specialists, as one might call them, found a rudely appreciative audience among the common folk long before and long after the above dates. The people of medieval days tried, it seems, to turn everything into a story. The preachers, as in Anglo-Saxon days, continued to tell the lives of saints, animal stories, even romances, anything to hold the attention of a thick-headed audience. On trips through the country, as in the *Canterbury Tales*, in the camp, on the march, the story beguiled the hours.

FOLK TALES

The old Anglo-Saxon liking for songs of violent fights, such as *Beowulf*, did not die with the coming of the Normans; for under the new régime such heroes as Beves of Hampton, who had performed great exploits in Armenia; Guy of Warwick, who had slain the Danish giant Colbrand and killed the savage boar of Windsor and the ferocious dun cow of Dunsmoor; King Horn, the warrior and lover; and Hereward, revived and flourished. The English indeed relearned the lesson of their own valiant ones through French poems and romances, and came to know them thoroughly only after the legends had become tinged with Norman traits. These stories may have become more artistic under the hand of the French raconteur; but doubtless they lost much of the primitive Anglo-Saxon virility and individuality. Thus, the story of *Horn and Rimenhild* (c. 1200), written probably by a Norman in England named Thomas, possesses much of the ancient war spirit; but the conventionalities of romance, such as the warning by dreams and the uniform feats of the hero, give even this ex-

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cellent narrative a slight tone of superficiality. Before 1300 the story, *Horn Childe*, modeled upon this poem, showed what a confused mingling of Northern tradition and French romance had occurred in Britain. Then, before 1450 appeared a popular French romance on Horn, soon translated into English, *Ponthus et Sidoine*, which, after all, was largely a book of instructions for the making of a perfect knight. Thus the rude tale of a virile English or Danish fighter had evolved into a guide-book in courtesy, and the viking into a "flower of chivalry."

Havelok the Dane, always popular with the humbler people, was perhaps the story of a Norse king, Olaf, a fighter whom Athelstan drove out of Northamptonshire in 927, who was routed at the Battle of Brunanburh, and who reigned as King of Dublin until 981. Such a hero would prove a magnet for all loose bits of tradition, and many were the tales, therefore, that centered about him. Robert of Brunne in his Chronicle tells us of an early metrical romance concerning him. King Gounter of Denmark is slain, and his wife and his son Havelok escape with the aid of a sailor, Grim. Being attacked by pirates, the queen is killed; but the boy and Grim escape to Grimsby where the mariner rears the child as his own. When Havelok grows up he goes to the court of the King of Lyndsey (Lincolnshire), who in time marries his niece, Argill, to Havelok, who is now nothing but a kitchen servant. The wife, wishing Havelok to find some high ancestry to relieve her of this disgrace, urges him to go to Grimsby, where his real parentage is discovered. Havelok then goes to Denmark, recovers his father's kingdom, successfully wages war in

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England to regain his wife's lands, and thus becomes ruler of Denmark, Lyndsey, and Norfolk.

This British Havelok is one figure not greatly weakened by French conventionalities. Before 1300 there was a three-thousand line English poem on the subject, in which the characters are rude, homely people; Havelok is sheltered by a real fisherman, and the fisherman's wife is more ugly than the usual fishwife. The king's son works like a peasant; he becomes an apprentice to a cook. The tale is decidedly democratic, and, giving views of ordinary life in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and possessing the free ballad air, it gained for Havelok a sure place in the hearts of the people. He was granted a position in the histories of the time; he was given a date of reigning (usually in the sixth century); and his name was often used in connection with Danish claims to the British throne.

French stories of the British heroes, Beves of Hampton and Guy of Warwick, were current in the twelfth century, were put into English early in the thirteenth, and were popular from that period even up to the days of Samuel Johnson. So well known did legends of these two become that their names were at length subjects for lighter tales, and finally of stories tinged with foulness. As we have noted, Guy and his fight with the Danish giant present an excellent opportunity for a stirring legend, and indeed the knight needed but a talented poet to make him the theme of a lengthy romance. Beves, more popular in France and Holland than in Britain, was, nevertheless, portrayed in Anglo-Norman *chansons de geste* and Middle English romances. Originally a Danish-English tale of the tenth century, its hero, like

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most French heroes, evolved into a fighter of dragons and monsters and an adventurer who escaped by trick, intrigue, or supernatural aid. Here, once more, the primitive fire, simplicity, and dignity of the older form were probably crushed out by the unending array of conventional deeds and characteristics.

Now, too, in discussing the tales that became a part of the common heritage, we must not forget the people's ideal, Robin Hood. Whether or not he lived we cannot tell. Professor Child, the greatest authority on ballads, considers him a "creation of the ballad muse." Doubtless there were as early as the fourteenth century many gestures or tales of this Robber of the Green Wood; but the forms we have to-day are of about 1500. Here indeed was a hater of rich churchmen and haughty nobles, but a true lover of his king, a respecter of womanhood, a man who loved his fellow men, his country, and his religion; in short, an epitome of yeoman virtues. No wonder that the folk loved him and that all other ballad heroes, even though near to the heart of the hearers, became subordinate to him.

Now, all such stories had an abundant store of vulgar or, at least, coarse humor, and thus side by side with the nobler themes of Arthur and Alexander, as heard in the castles, this common current ran its muddy course. The story of Sir Cleges might serve as a specimen of the wit—not vulgar here—that tickled the groundlings of Norman-English society. Sir Cleges, while praying under a cherry tree at Christmas time, discovers ripe fruit on the branches. He takes a basket of it to the King of Cardiff, but is so ragged that before gaining admittance he has to promise the porter, the usher, and

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the steward each a third of the present expected. The pleased monarch asks him what reward he desires; he requests twelve hard strokes, and these he distributes among the three scamps, much to the enjoyment of the court audience. Not only is the liking for the practical joke to be found here; there is another and a deeper idea conveyed: the common folk were growing tired of romance; the parody or burlesque on it had come, and that meant danger to the original.

The fabliaux, or merry tales, were innumerable. Always jolly, often vulgar, luckily they were generally brief—something to be told while men drank their ale about the tavern hearth. The women in these narratives were invariably false or scolding jades, a wilful perversion of the dainty, fairy ladies of the French romances, and another evidence that the common people could not stand too much Arthurian tenderness and sentiment. An early specimen of the fabliaux is *The Land of Cokaygne*—a reversion of Avalon, a blessed country where fat monks and priests might indulge their gluttony and adultery. Another example is *The Friar and the Boy*, a well-beloved tale in England, one in which a boy with a magic pipe makes a priest cut all sorts of unseemly capers. The same enchanted cup idea that the higher minstrels developed so wonderfully into the noble Legend of the Holy Grail became in the hands of the lower folk *The Tale of the Basin*, a bowl so bewitched that it held fast all who touched it, thus causing intense joy to the lucky ones who saw half the village struggling to gain freedom. The man who is hard to kill, a theme, charmingly mingled with romance in *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, found himself

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degenerated into the people's hero, Dan Hugh Monk, who was hanged once and slain four times, but persisted in living. As we read later of the lovely and lovable stories of Arthur and his Table Round, stories which made the noble ladies in the castle weep for sympathy, we must not forget that down in the lower strata of society another current of legend was flowing, a stream that was just as likely to have its effect upon the fiction of a later date.

The churchmen in their efforts to elevate these "folk of the earth" invented religious tales of the same simplicity. Both Frenchman and Englishman were exceedingly fond of religious legends. Of course stories of St. Nicholas, the patron of sailors, were favorites; but tales of British and Celtic saints were as enthusiastically told by Normans as were narrations of Continental churchmen. Specimens of such Celtic themes retold in Norman-French are the *Lives of St. Alban, St. Catherine, St. George*, and the popular *St. Brendan*, the last named being but the old Welsh legend of the hero who visited the Isles of the Blest. Full of superstition these may have been; yet undoubtedly they had an effect upon the people, especially of rural England. In one of these stories a Jew (the hated Hebrew was a favorite subject) attempted to roast his son for communing with Christians at Easter; but the Virgin Mary made the oven entirely comfortable for the child. In such stories the Virgin performed innumerable miracles, such as reviving the drowned or restoring to life the martyrs burned at the stake or hanged; while Christ himself sometimes came down to earth and had contests of strength or skill with mortals. Thus, in *The*

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'mith and His Dame, Christ takes a blacksmith's ugly mother-in-law and forges her into a beautiful lady; while the smith, attempting the same trick with his wife, hammers her into a pulp. How had magic, romance, and religion fallen from their high station in such tales as these!

Along with this type went the beast fables, stories brought into England at the Conquest, but originating far back in the dawn of creation among the peoples of Asia. Bestiaries, as such collections were called, were immensely popular, and the Church, finding the books a pleasant and convincing means for teaching moral lessons, aided heartily in increasing their popularity. Strange indeed were the theological conclusions gained from the beast stories. The lion covers his trail with his tail; after his birth he sleeps for three days and is then aroused by his father's roaring; he sleeps with his eyes open. So, "dearly beloved," Christ hid himself on earth so that the devil might not find Him; He lay in the tomb until the third day, when the might of the Father aroused Him; His eyes never close on mankind. Doubtless the people cared precious little about the moral, but they liked to hear about the animals. Just as in the development of the legends of Arthur, Alexander and Charlemagne, these beast fables at length began to form a kind of epic or legend about one animal, Reynard the Fox, and throughout England, Germany, Holland, France, and Italy, Reynard was known to high and low. The shrewd Chaucer used just such a story in his *Nun's Priest's Tale*; while the shrewder Jaxton printed in 1481 translations of some exploits of the foxy hero that gained an enormous vogue for such

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an unlettered day. Students of comparative literature have pointed out that these allegorical animal legends probably originated in a collection called *Physiologus*, written by Alexandrian Christians, a book which, after spreading throughout Western Europe, had a Middle English imitation about 1225. Be that as it may, those tales, old almost as humanity itself, aroused among the peasant English an abiding enthusiasm scarcely equaled by any or any part of the great cycles of romance known among the upper classes.

These, then, were the forms of fiction with which the common people were intimately acquainted—degraded parodies on legends of magic, funny stories of domestic troubles, accounts of practical jokes, tales of religious miracles, lives of the saints, and allegorical legends of animals. The wonderful narratives of Arthur and Charlemagne, Alexander and Troy, were, of course, known to them; but they cared not to abide long on such high levels, and in these lower forms of the story-teller's art they found unceasing interest and merriment.

THE HIGHER FICTION

The nineteenth century brought forth an undue or exaggerated vaunting of democracy. The genius of the "common people" has constantly been thrust before us. But the noblest literature, like education, has generally come from *above downward*, and not from *below upward*, and as we study the development of fiction we find that it is not always the theme most popular among the idolized "masses" that makes for great literature, but frequently the creations of some fine, delicate soul almost unknown to the vast public of his

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period. To some extent this is the case in our present study. A few scholarly churchmen, a few hermit-like scribes, a few aristocratic minstrels, casting about among their yellow parchments, gathered lofty themes that have made English literature the glory and the pride of Western culture.

Much might be said of medieval idealism. It was a day of dreamers of high visions, and their cathedrals, their paintings, their sculptures, and especially their literature show it. In their efforts toward self-expression, their writings often seem exaggerated; but they are filled with a poetic, almost pathetic striving to body forth the high creations of a glowing imagination. So in England the chronicle writers in the monasteries and churches and the minstrels in the castle were not content to have their historical figures remain mere human beings, but attributed to them all mortal and immortal virtues, all beauty and sweetness, all magic and mystery.

War and religion and love were the principal themes, and the Normans accepted from any source whatever ideas that might aid in idealizing these three themes. "Wherever his neighbor invented or possessed anything worthy of admiration, the sharp, inquisitive Norman poked his aquiline nose. . . . The Norman was a practical plagiarist,"—practical because he saw that all these acquisitions gave importance to his nation; practical because he improved on everything he accepted. He therefore seized the stories of Alexander and Troy from the Greek and the Latin, the exploits of Charlemagne from the French, the story of Arthur from the Welsh, the tales of Horn and Havelok and Beves

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from the Saxons, and he wove them into cycles of romance never excelled in any literature.

THE CLASSICAL MATTER

Before entering into the greatest and the most English of these cycles, the Arthurian, perhaps it would be well to dispose of the other groups of legends that to some degree entertained the people of Britain. The traditions of Greece and Rome, such as the stories of Alexander the Great, Troy, and Brutus, long enjoyed an immense popularity upon the Continent; but they met with only a fair degree of success among the people of Britain. And yet the medieval British devoutly believed themselves of Trojan blood. Had not all their early chroniclers, Nennius in his *History of Britain*, Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *History of the British Kings*, Wace in his *Brut d' Angleterre*, and Layamon in his *Brut*, explicitly stated that Brutus in his flight from Troy had come to these islands, settled there, and thus gained for them the name "Britain"? Not only the islanders themselves but practically all the inhabitants of Western Europe accepted the legend, and gathered about it a mighty mass of poetry and romance. Toward the middle of the twelfth century a Frenchman, Benoit, put the account into his *Roman de Troie*, and his popular story still further spread the tradition throughout the Continent. The book suited the times; for, though the names remained Greek, the situations, the characters, the general tone were medieval; the usual Norman fays, demons, and monsters were present, and the warriors of Troy became knights of chivalry. As Professor Schofield says, in his *English Literature from*

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the Norman Conquest to Chaucer, "Benoit saw antiquity through a glass darkly and relished the sight," and he caused others to enjoy it for the same reason. A certain scholar, Joseph of Exeter, wrote a Latin poem, *De Bello Trojano*, about 1187, and this brought the legend further favor among the higher literary classes of England. Then came Guido of Sicily about 1280 with his famous Latin book on the *Destruction of Troy*, and this in the original and in translation caused even greater enthusiasm than Benoit's version of the previous century. It was translated into English, and every chronicler copied from it. Shortened forms of the story, such as the *Sege of Troy*, dealing with only certain episodes, grew popular on the island; such an episode we find in Chaucer's beautiful *Troilus and Cresseide*. The liking for the legend did not soon perish; the scholars who read the histories of Geoffrey, Wace, and Layamon doubtless often repeated the stories; Lydgate, as late as 1415, wrote in his *Troy Book*, or *History of the Siege and Destruction of Troy* more than thirty thousand lines; while Caxton in the first volume printed in the English language (1474) used it as the theme of his *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*.

The story of Thebes was another sometimes told in English courts and very often in continental courts. Even before the Troy legend had grown popular this narrative had been put into a French romance of the twelfth century, and under the influence of the roving Normans it became widely known through Italy, Spain, France, and Germany, and, to some degree, in England. Boccaccio used it in his story, *Il Teseide*; Chaucer gave a version in his *Knight's Tale*; Lydgate attempted to

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tell the whole story in poetry; Caxton translated a French form, *Livre des Eneydes*, toward the close of the fifteenth century; Shakespeare used the legend in his *Two Noble Kinsmen*; and Dryden found it an inspiration for his *Palamon and Arcite*. It is apparent, therefore, that it gained an audience in Great Britain, but whether a large or enthusiastic one is doubtful.

The cycle of Alexander the Great had somewhat better fortune among the islanders. Versions in the Norman, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, Scottish, and Middle English testify to its popularity even among the masses. The legends undoubtedly reached the English shore before the Norman Conquest; indeed, they had been known widely through Europe before the Normans became a nation.

In all these Alexander was, of course, modernized; he became a chivalrous knight of medieval habits, a sort of "Homer in a dress suit"; while fays and giants and mysterious creatures and the Otherworld made his adventures as romantic as heart could desire. But what is the story all about? Surely the mere conquests by Alexander were not sufficient for the immense body of legend gathered in these works. By no means; Alexander, like other medieval subjects, gathered to himself all the attributes of strong heroes, all the love adventures of lovers whose names would not come quickly to mind, all the deeds that forgotten warriors had ever accomplished.

Culling from the various versions, we find the story starting with the strange circumstances surrounding Alexander's birth. Nectanabus, an Egyptian king and magician, goes to Macedonia, falls in love with Olym-

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pias, persuades her that the god Ammon is in love with her, impersonates Ammon himself, thus becomes the father of Alexander, educates the boy carefully, and is repaid for his pains by being thrown into a pit, where he perishes. Now begin the great adventures of the young hero. The King of Cesarea insults him; Alexander conquers the monarch; the hero threatens to destroy Athens, but is dissuaded by Aristotle; he returns home to find his supposed father about to make a union with Cleopatra, and he drives her away in disgrace. Then Philip is poisoned by Olympias and her paramour. Alexander goes forth to fight the Persian king, Darius, who has sent him an insulting message; he bathes in the Cydnus, crosses Lube and Lutis, sees a strange hill that makes brave men cowards and cowards brave, captures Tarsus, besieges Tyre, meets with mighty resistance from the Philistines, but overcomes all enemies, enters Jerusalem, and avenges the murder of Darius.

And now the marvelous experiences are but beginning. He goes in a glass case to the bottom of the ocean; he sees the wonderful scenery and the peoples of India; he overcomes Darius' friend, Porus; he punishes the mighty fighters, Gog and Magog, and shuts them off with a magic wall; he sees the Pillars of Hercules; he is attacked by strange beasts and horrible, abnormal men; he enters the "Valley from Which None Return," but escapes by aid from a devil whom he had set free; a part of his army perishes because of the wiles of sirens; he meets three ancient, horned men, who tell him of the Fountain of Youth, the Fountain of Immortality, and the Fountain of Resurrection; on attempting to reach these springs he is hampered by

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fierce monsters; a forest of plant-maidens, half flower, half human, aid him; he and his army, after great suffering, reach the Fountain of Youth and become as young men. The speaking Trees of the Sun and Moon foretell the manner of his death; Porus, hearing of this, wages battle with him and is slain; Alexander visits Babylon and flies through the air in a chariot drawn by griffins; the Amazons displayed their fighting qualities; the warrior is warned by his mother of treachery; he is poisoned; he divides his dominion among the Twelve Peers, and perishes.

This is but the merest outline of some versions of the legend; but into this huge framework fitted a mosaic of love episodes, intrigues, fierce encounters, magic tricks, mysterious visits, that could not be described fully in the span of one's life. It was an exhaustless source of vivid fiction, and its power of entertaining gave it a tremendous influence in the development of Continental narrative and no small influence on the course of English fiction. It appealed to the Saxon love of a physical hero; it satisfied the Norman longing for love-romance; it charmed the Celtic sense of the mysterious and mystical. Had not a greater and truer story in the Arthurian legend come forward, it might have become the foremost cycle of the British Isles.

Before leaving this "matter of antiquity" perhaps one or two other stories of classical source should be mentioned. Apollonius of Tyre, as we have seen, had become known to the Anglo-Saxon before the entrance of the Norman; nor did it lose its popularity among the nation. Gower used the story in his *Confessio Amantis*; Shakespeare, to some extent, in his *Pericles*.

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The romance of *Blanchefleur and Floris*, with its old tale of lovers' separation and reunion; the *Squire of Low Degree*, popular because it told of a common person's rise in life and thus appealed to the democracy of the crowd; the legend of William of Palerne, translated from the French about 1350 and bringing in the ancient idea of a man's or woman's being changed into a beast; stories of the nine worthies—Arthur, Charlemagne, Godefroy, Hector, Alexander, Cæsar, Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabeus—these tales, largely of early Eastern origin, found a willing audience throughout England. Then, there was the sweet poetry-story, *Aucassin and Nicolette*, which bids fair to gain its former popularity.

Sweet the song, the story sweet,
There is no man hearkens it,
No man living 'neath the sun,
So outwearied, so foredone,
Sick and woeful, worn and sad,
But is healed, but is glad,
'Tis so sweet.

Nicolette, of foreign birth, is loved by the king's son, Aucassin; but his father's pride separates them, and each suffers as a prisoner for love of the other. Wild was their passion for each other. Cries Aucassin:

"In Paradise what have I to win? Therein I seek not to enter, but only to have Nicolette, my sweet lady that I love so well. For into Paradise go none but such folk as I shall tell thee now: thither go these same old priests, and halt old men and maimed, who all day and night cower continually before the altars and in the crypts; and such folk as wear old amices and old clouted

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frocks, and naked folk and shoeless, and covered with sores, perishing of hunger and thirst, and of cold, and of little ease. These be they that go into Paradise; with them I have naught to do. But into Hell would I fain go; for into Hell fare the goodly clerks, and goodly knights that fall in tourneys and great wars, and stout men at arms, and all men noble. With these would I liefly go. And thither pass the sweet ladies and courteous that have two lovers, or three, and their lords also thereto. Thither goes the gold, and the silver, and cloth of vair, and cloth of gris, and harpers, and makers, and the prince of this world. With these I would gladly go, let me but have with me Nicolette, my sweetest lady!"

At length Nicolette escapes to the forest, and Aucassin, set free, goes hunting, finds her, and flees with her to the King of Torelore, the monarch of a land where war is waged with baked apples, eggs, and cheese. Aucassin frees the king of all enemies and lives a season of bliss with Nicolette. Then the lovers are carried off by the Saracens, and after years of separation are united once more at Biaucaire.

When his love he saw at last,
Arms about her did he cast;
Kissed her often, kissed her sweet,
Kissed her lips and brow and eyes.
Thus all night do they devise
Even till the morning white.
Then Aucassin wedded her,
Made her Lady of Biaucaire.
Many years abode they there,
Many years in shade or sun,
In great gladness and delight.

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Ne'er hath Aucassin regret,
Nor his lady Nicolette.

Such stories, together with the collections of accounts about great heroes and lovers, such as the *Gesta Romanorum* (c. 1300), used so frequently by Chaucer, Lydgate, Shakespeare, and others, were doubtless based largely on classic foundations, but gained in time a gentleness, a tenderness, a touch of chivalric romance totally unknown to the ancient raconteurs who first told them.

THE MATTER OF FRANCE

The Alexander cycle and the Troy cycle, as we have seen, gained a wide audience on the continent and at least a favorable hearing on English soil. The third great cycle, the Charlemagne, seems to have been the only one of the four that really originated from the people, and on the Continent became as well known in hut as in palace. The Arthurian legend, gaining its wide notice through the more scholarly writers and more aristocratic minstrels, was indeed more artistic, and in later centuries far more famous and productive; but neither it nor the Alexander nor the Troy gained the ear of the common folk so readily as traditions of the wonderful Charles the Great. We all have read how the gallant minstrel, Taillefer, rode before the Norman invaders at the Battle of Hastings, flashing his staff into the air and bravely singing the *Song of Roland*:

God and his angels of Heaven defend
That France through me from her glory bend;
Death were better than fame laid low,
Our emperor loveth a downright blow.

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The song tells the story of Roland's mighty battle against the Saracens in a pass of the Pyrenees. One blast of his horn would have brought his emperor, Charlemagne, to the rescue; but Roland prefers to die rather than ask aid against a "pagan" foe.

I will not sound on my ivory horn;
It shall never be spoken of me in scorn
That for heathen felons one blast I blew.

The result is death, and a terrible vengeance visited by Charlemagne upon the enemy.

The *Song of Roland* is, therefore, but a branch of the widespread Charlemagne legend, and Taillefer's singing it is but another evidence of the fascination the cycle had for courtier, soldier, and peasant. Both English and Norman could admire this mighty Charles; for he was recognized as the first great Christian monarch; in him were mingled the admirable traits of Christian and racial fidelity. In time the Normans in England, probably from jealousy, exalted Arthur so that the Normans of the Continent might realize that Britain, too, had its mighty hero; but it was long before the mild Prince of Avalon overshadowed on the mainland the great figure of the Frankish warrior. These poetical stories of Charlemagne and other valiant leaders took unto themselves the name *chansons de geste*, "songs" of "actual deeds," and such chansons, long sung by the minstrels, were at length written down in their poetic form, and later turned into prose. Then, at last, any account of real or imaginary deeds became known as a "gest," and as the humbler story-tellers lowered the tone of the legends and turned them into

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merry tales, the once brave and serious stories secured for themselves, when collected, the name "jest-books." From the virile descriptions of the mighty Charles to the scurrilous squibs found in some of these jest-books is a tremendous fall; but one may trace the descent by the fragments knocked off as the legend bumped down from one stage of society to another.

This *Song of Roland*, in existence before 1050, is based, like all these cycles, on some historical foundation. The Gascon mountaineers did destroy a French host at the Roncesvalles Pass in the Pyrenees in August, 778, and Roland of Brittany was killed. From such a meager germ the legend expanded to great length. The mountaineers became Saracens, and thus Roland became a defender of both France and Christianity. A fair lady, Aude, is introduced, and she, hearing of her lover's death, dies of sorrow. Charlemagne, old and mighty warrior, is, like Arthur in his legend, not the main figure in each event, but seems to hover in the background, never intruding, but never wholly out of mind. The savage, proud emotion in it, the surge of battle, the idealism of it all, should have appealed to Anglo-Saxon as well as to Norman, and there is plentiful evidence that it was long popular in Great Britain. Even after the French had lost their prestige, the poem was translated into English, and, though written for knights and the higher ranks of warriors, was not unknown among the other ranks of society.

Numerous indeed were the legends of Charles. One, the *Pilgrimage of Charlemagne*, composed apparently for the middle classes, tells of his going to Jerusalem, of the deep reverence accorded him there, and of the gifts

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presented; but the inevitable plebeian longing for the comic element demanded that he stop at Constantinople, where he gets drunk, and is saved from disgrace only by the intervention of God. Thus did the Middle Ages mingle the reverent and the gross. In order to gain an excuse for his stopping in this city the story states that his wife had declared Hugo, Emperor of Constantinople, a handsomer man than he. Perhaps too sudden confirmation of the truth was the excuse for his shameful spree in the land of strangers.

Roland's experience with a Saracen, Sir Otuel of Spain, was another popular theme of the cycle. Otuel and Roland are bitter foes; but at length, in the midst of a terrific duel, a dove descends from Heaven and lights upon the Saracen. The meaning is too evident to be scorned; he becomes a Christian; he marries the king's daughter; and evermore he fights for the faith of Christ. This artful mingling of war, religion, and love is one of the most sincere charms of medieval literature,—indeed, a charm as real and gratifying to us of to-day as to men of seven centuries ago. This same mingling may be seen in another of the Charlemagne stories, *Roland and Vernagu*, which tells of Charlemagne's trip to Constantinople, his campaign against the Saracens in Spain, and the fierce battle, lasting two days, between Roland and a black giant, forty feet tall, named Vernagu, in which duel Roland, noticing the weariness of his foe, grants him time for sleep and gathers stones to place as a pillow under the monster's head.

Just as we should expect, in the course of time these brave stories of Charlemagne took on, among the better classes, more and more of the romantic and fairy char-

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acter. Lord Berners' translation, *The Book of Duke Huon de Bordeaux*, a well-written Charlemagne narrative, is a good illustration; for here the hero has lost his barbarous fierceness, and reminds us of Arthur, while Oberon enters to introduce the ever-pleasing theme of fairyland. It touched a responsive chord in the British heart; Spenser shows its effect in his *Faerie Queene*, Shakespeare in his *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Keats in his *Endymion*. This fairy matter was indeed a most successful bid for popularity; for the fairy mythology was native to the Celts and pleasant to the Normans, while the Anglo-Saxons were rapidly cultivating a taste for it.

MATTER OF BRITAIN

As we have seen, the Charlemagne legend, in spite of its popularity among the higher classes, never became a national cycle in England. The people admired its wars and its heroes; but the country and the times were changing so rapidly that no one group of leaders existed long enough to have centered about themselves the marvelous doings of Charles and his fighters. When, on the other hand, the English read or heard the Arthur legend, they did not seek to find a modern national hero to fit into it; for this story was not merely English but *universal*. "The matter of Britain was in its beginnings largely myth and fable; that of France was idealized fact. . . . When men read the stories of King Arthur and his knights, they felt the glamour of mystery; they were bespelled by unreality, by visions."¹

¹ Schofield's *History of Eng. Literature, Norman Conquest to Chaucer*, p. 125.

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In this cycle of the gentle Arthur we have the most rounded, the most subtle, the most artistic of all legends. The others, the Troy, Alexander, and Charlemagne, might run on forever; their heroes had no one ideal; their wars might last as long as a fresh lot of heroes could be created. But here, when we see the blameless Prince of Avalon sink down in death near the "broken chancel with a broken cross," "we have reached," as Saintsbury says in his *Flourishing of Romance*, "and feel that we have reached, the conclusion of the whole matter when the Graal has been taken to Heaven, and Arthur has gone to Avalon. . . . The end is not violent or factitious, it is necessary and inevitable."

Numerous bitter controversies have arisen as to the origins of this Arthurian matter. There seem to be four theories, which, in the words of Saintsbury, are: "(I) That the legend is not merely in its first conception, but in its main bulk, Celtic, either (a) Welsh or (b) Armorican. (II) That it is, except in the mere names and the vaguest outline, French. (III) That it is English, or at least Anglo-Norman. (IV) That it is mainly a literary growth, owing something to the Greek romances, and not to be regarded without error as a new development unconnected, or almost unconnected, with traditional sources of any kind." Perhaps a mingling of all these would come nearer the truth than any single theory. The half-hidden influences of classical lore, sifting through all stages of society, must not be neglected; the influence of Provence and Wales on the development of this special cycle cannot be cast aside. Eleanor of Poitou married

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Henry II in 1149, and the famous love-poet, Bernard de Ventadour, resided with her. There was a constant coming and going of troubadours between England and the Continent during the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, and these French and the Welsh bards must have found themselves close together in both spirit and temperament. Then, too, French writers, such as Marie de France and Crestien de Troyes, spent a portion of their lives in England and there did literary work akin to the Welsh legends and writings.

The writers of chronicles in Great Britain deserve no minor honors for their part in carrying forward and developing this wonderful legend of Arthur and the Table Round. There was a real Arthur, it appears, a leader of the Britons after the departure of the Romans in the fifth century,—a leader who, from a petty chief of a West England army, grew—thanks to these chroniclers—into a world conqueror. It seems that Arthur is first mentioned, or rather, indicated, in the *Historia Britonum* of about 826, a book which was, perhaps, an amplified form of one written a little after 600. The historian Gildas who apparently was Arthur's contemporary, says in his *De Excidio et Conquestu Britannie* that the Britons so badly defeated the invading Saxons at Mount Badon that for fifty years the country was undisturbed. Nennius tells us that Arthur was commander in a great battle at Mount Badon and gained a lengthy peace. Thus through this battle, occurring between 480 and 500, we have double authority for the "Arthurian" leadership mentioned by later historians. Soon after the death of this valiant leader the stories of ancient Welsh gods began to gather about him, and

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for the next seven or eight centuries all romance and all figures of romance became subordinate to him or merged into his great personality.

Perhaps it was in such a condition that Geoffrey of Monmouth found the theme when he began the book which gave Arthur his first wide fame—the *History of the British Kings* (c. 1140). This might be classed as one of the numerous “epoch-making” books. Geoffrey, a Welshman born at Monmouth, early had a rather intimate acquaintance with Welsh, English, French, and Latin. As a prominent churchman, as Bishop of St. Asaph, he doubtless became familiar with the better classes of Normans, and may indeed have heard in the castles the Norman minstrels singing Arthurian lays carried to France by those Welsh who in former centuries had fled to the Continent because of the pressure of the invading Saxons. From the fragments gained through his reading and hearing in four languages, he “wove together an amazing tissue of subtle fabrication.” He claimed that he found all in an ancient book; but scholars of the day laughed at his imaginary source and scoffed at his *History* itself. But the natives praised it because it flattered their pride of ancestry; the Normans admired it because it presented a hero as great as the Charlemagne of the Continental Normans; the general audience liked it because it contained stories of genuine human interest. Therefore, both its friends and its enemies advertised it; its fame went far. William of Newburgh, of the same century, says: “A certain writer has come up in our times to wipe out the blots on the Britons, weaving together ridiculous figments about them and raising them with impudent

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vanity high above the virtue of the Macedonians and the Romans. This man is named Geoffrey, and has the by-name of Arthur, because, laying on the color of Latin speech, he disguised with the honest name of history the fables about Arthur taken from the old tales of the Britons with increase of his own." Some of the churchmen passed the story about that a man possessed of devils could drive them away by placing the Gospel of John upon his breast; but that if he placed Geoffrey's book instead, they returned in legions. The book was the "best seller" of the twelfth century.

From this time forth every chronicler felt it a duty to tell and to add to the legend of Arthur. Gaimar in his French translation of Geoffrey (before 1150), Matthew Paris (1259) in his widely known *Chronica Major*, the scholarly churchman and entertaining historian, Walter Map (d. 1210), the churchman, Wace, in his *Brut d'Angleterre* (c. 1155), the simple-minded, credulous Englishman, Layamon, in his *Brut* (c. 1206), Robert of Gloucester (c. 1280), in his poetical chronicle, Thomas Bek of Castelford in his history, Robert Manning of Lincolnshire, the author of the once famous *Handlyng Synne*, in his chronicle of England, de Waurin's *Recueil* or *Complete History of Britain*, and Caxton in his *Cronycles of England* (1480)—these and a host of others found pleasure in transmitting and enlarging the legend of the national hero. There was a mighty host of tales that Malory found ready for his hand in 1469 when his pen wrote those opening lines of *Morte d'Arthur*: "It befell in the days of Uther Pendragon . . . that there was a mighty duke in Cornwall that held war against him long time."

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Each of these chroniclers tinged the story with his individuality and with the traits of his nation. The renditions that Geoffrey found before him were in many instances at least uncouth if not positively ridiculous. Arthur's men could easily have secured high salaries in a modern museum or vaudeville house. One hero could stand on one leg an entire day; another could project his bristly red beard over forty-eight rafters; another had lips so large that one fell into his lap and the other curled about his head like a hood; another raised such an outcry if his wants were not satisfied that he could keep an entire city from sleep. Yet, the mystical element was by no means absent. A messenger there was who could walk on the tree-tops, and never was known to bend the grass as he ran; Arthur's guide could instantly find his way through an unknown country; the interpreter understood a language though he had never heard it before; one knight could strike fire from his feet; one could make a bridge for a great army by simply laying his sword flat upon the water; one, though buried seven cubits in the earth, could hear an ant fifty miles away arising from its nest.

Now, it took the fantastic genius of Geoffrey to build from this strange material a structure of lasting beauty; it required his genius to transform the warrior Arthur into the romantic figure that has captivated the world. Fortunately Arthur possessed the mystery of obscurity, and Geoffrey, adding to him whatever he pleased, created him brave, handsome, tender, religious, emotional—all, indeed, that the chivalrous knights and courtly ladies of Norman days could desire. The Welsh fighter immediately became “a very perfect, gentle knight,”

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and more—a superhuman defender of the ideals of humanity.

His father is a king who by the aid of the magician, Merlin, satisfies his passion for the beautiful wife of an old duke. The boy, who is the result of this passion, reigns at fifteen; everybody loves him; his gleaming personality attracts the bravest soldiers, the wisest counsellors, the loveliest of women. But Geoffrey does not make him a mere handsome gentleman. In the twelve great battles against the Saxons, which doubtless occurred at wide intervals, but which Geoffrey arranges in a short campaign, he is portrayed as a fighter who would have pleased old Beowulf himself. He becomes, under the hand of Geoffrey, the irresistible foe of the Saxons; he conquers Ireland, Norway, and Gaul; he reigns in Paris; he even reaches the Alps in an intended campaign against Rome. But rebellion at home and the unfaithfulness of the beautiful Guinevere compel his return to England, and there in his own land he is wounded to the death and is carried afar to the mystical island of Avalon to be healed. His magic sword, Excalibur or Caliburn, had come from that land and probably, too, his marvelous dagger and cloak that made him invisible, and the beautiful women of that isle received him in his distress. Surely the gods were with him.

All this was exceedingly gratifying to the Normans in England. In their jealousy of the Continental Normans, they were glad to exhibit a hero of their own who had conquered France and reigned in Paris, and had set forth those rules which had since become French manners and customs. Then, too, Arthur as an indi-

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vidual made every appeal to the Norman sense of bravery, delicacy, knightliness, and chivalry in general. Eagerly, indeed, did they encourage further renderings of the legend. Wace, writing in French, gave the character further French traits of refinement and sentiment; he allowed him to try tricky methods in overcoming enemies, but increased his politeness and chivalry. Wace, it seems, added the Round Table, and gave the whole story a greater tinge of romance. Walter Map elaborated the legend in most beautiful terms, and, if he did not positively create the Holy Grail portion, at least gave it that prominence which made the whole cycle a noble story of high idealism. Layamon, in his plain English way, portrays Arthur as a strong-willed, hard-striking chieftain, a man always willing to grant a square deal, an Englishman of the old type. Layamon may have had his doubts about some of the marvels related by Geoffrey and Wace; but he by no means scorned the magic used in the legend. He was probably the first to tell of the three strange women who suddenly appeared at the hero's birth and predicted his fate; he was the first, it seems, to tell of Arthur's departure to Avalon to be healed; he added much to the description of the mysterious Round Table, so constructed that sixteen hundred men might be seated without quarrels as to precedence and yet so strangely made that it could be folded and carried by one man. He added many a touch of realism to the story. He invented conversations that we wish to believe and regret did not occur. Thus, when the foes sue for peace, Layamon gives this description:

“Then laughed Arthur with loud voice: ‘Thanks be

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to God that all dooms wieldeth that Childrie the strong is tired of my land! My land he hath apportioned to all his chief knights; myself he thought to drive out of my country, hold me for base, and have my realms and my kin all put to death, my folk all destroyed. But with him it has happened as it is with the fox when he is boldest over the weald and hath his full play and fowls enow, for wildness he climbeth and rocks he seeketh; in the wilderness holes to him he worketh. For whoever shall fare, he hath never any care. He weeneth to be of power the boldest of all animals. But when to him come men under the hills, with hounds, with loud cries, the hunters there hollow, the hounds there give tongue, they drive the fox over dales and downs; he fleeth to the holm and seeketh his hole; into the farthest end of the hole he goeth; then is the bold fox of bliss all deprived, and men dig to him on every side; then is most wretched the proudest of all animals! So was it with Childrie the strong and the rich.' "

Robert of Gloucester in his version was less credulous, and spoke of the return of Arthur as a "British lie," and expressed his opinion that Excalibur was just a good sword made in some English town. Clearly Robert was a rather rank materialist. Thomas Bek somewhat defended the Anglo-Saxon invaders, but he could dim none of Arthur's glory thereby. Robert Manning plainly followed Wace and other French versions; he elaborated some events, added the stories of the British heroes, such as Havelok and Richard the Lion-Hearted, and made the Arthurian legend indeed an English story in English. Thus, we see, each author gave the tale a more universal touch, made Arthur more thoroughly a

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mingling of the historical and the mythical, and, at the same time, bound the legend more securely to English soil and to English history.

The stories told by Geoffrey and these other chroniclers, might in many instances have appealed not only to courtiers but to the humblest classes of society. For instance, Arthur's fight with the giant, Ritho, who wore furs made of the beards of kings whom he had vanquished, might have been found entertaining to any audience. This sort of thing Geoffrey might have picked up in ordinary Welsh tradition; but the glittering pictures of the glory of Arthur's court where "the valor of the men was an encouragement to the chastity of the women, and the love of the women a spur to the bravery of the warriors,"—such pictures were created by the genius of Geoffrey and his followers. The brilliant tournaments, the noble castles, the delicacy of manner, the richness of dress, the wisdom and gentleness of the king, the charm of the women, the cultured atmosphere of the court—these were idealistic additions to fascinate the Norman love of "sweetness and light."

With astonishing rapidity the legend spread over Europe. The achievements of Arthur became known in Italy and Spain; a scene from his life's history was carved on the Cathedral of Moderna before 1100; numerous places were named after him or his knights. It is apparent that Geoffrey and his imitators were but satisfying a wide-spread hunger for more knowledge concerning the hero. The traditions carried by the Armorican Britons in their flight from Wales to France in the sixth and seventh centuries had caught like fire among the French and the Normans, had come back,

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enlarged and embellished, with the invaders of Britain, and had swept north and south along the European coast. The tribal tradition of a small, conquered, and despised race had become one of the fountains of the world's literature.

MAKING THE CYCLE

Various odds and ends of romance had been added by the Normans before their coming to England in 1066; but not until after this date did the story develop into a great cycle with numerous branches. It is now our task to examine some of these branches or divisions.

The Normans, the English, and the Welsh soon vied with one another in adding tales of other heroes to the Round Table epic. Such characters as Gawaine and Lancelot, formerly distinct figures in separate legends, gave up their individual personality and merged it into that of Arthur. It was a gathering of heroes about one standard.

We have the names of at least two Norman writers in England who thus aided in the development of the cycle,—Marie de France and Crestien de Troyes. Marie, born on the Continent but long in England, took these ancient accounts of Arthurian heroes and wrought them into some of the most finished lays in all literature. There is a witchery about all she wrote,—a hint of Otherworld that makes her brief romances resemble beautiful dreams. In such a story as her *Guingamor*, where the knight lives three centuries with a fay in an enchanted land, we forget the impossibility of it in the simplicity, the beauty, the half-sad sweetness of it all. Marie's companion writer, Crestien, of the twelfth cen-

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ture, added tenderness and a romantic background to the old legends, minutely described the brilliant tournaments and festivals, and presented with delicacy what we might term the psychological aspects of the emotions experienced. Indeed, Crestien's influence in the molding of the cycle cannot be ignored; the Welsh themselves gladly accepted his versions; the massive German poem, *Parzival*, which later was to inspire Wagner, was undoubtedly affected by him.

Here was a strange mixture of the mortal and the immortal. Note, for example, this summary of Marie's *Launval*:

"One day, distressed by the loss of his possessions, Launval is musing alone by a river's side when two maidens approach and conduct him to their mistress, lying luxuriously in a splendid pavilion near by. She grants the knight her love, gives him rich gifts, and promises to be with him later whenever he desires, imposing but a single condition, that he make no boasts of her to any one. He lives for a time supremely happy in his new-found joy; but unfortunately one day in an unguarded moment he forgets the restriction his *amie* has imposed upon him, and boasts of her to the queen, who, like Potiphar's wife, has offered him her love. In so doing he forfeits his happiness, for he speedily discovers that the fay, true to her word, no longer heeds his desires. The queen having accused him of insulting her, Launval is sentenced to death unless he can prove the truth of his assertions concerning his beloved's beauty. His anguish at being separated from her is keen, but his prayers are of no avail. Not until the last moment of respite approaches does

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the fay appear. Then in all the stateliness of regal magnificence, preceded by two pairs of matchless maidens, she comes riding on a snow-white horse to Arthur's court, dazzles the eyes of the bewildered assembly, denounces the vicious queen, and obtains her lover's release. Thereupon she departs to the Isle of Avalon, whither Launval accompanies her to dwell forever in joy." ²

Thus writer after writer, whose names are now lost or but dimly remembered, added in either poetry or prose his tithe of suggestions or narratives, until by the middle of the thirteenth century the legend had assumed huge proportions. It lacked regularity of formation, it had not symmetry; it was a mass of additions often contradictory, but all important in the making of the whole. English versions of the Breton lays, such as *Sir Orfeo*, *Sir Degare*, *Emare*, *Sir Gowghter*, and *The Erle of Toulouse*, came into existence, and apparently all gave some hint, some scene, some episode, or some character to the ever-growing cycle. The various figures in these lays were not allowed to remain in their primitive state; they were humanized and even Christianized, and were made powers for chivalry and righteousness. Thus, in the story of *Sir Gowghter* we can see the gradual approach to the circle at the Round Table; Gowghter has by this time become Merlin's half-brother, and, like Merlin, he is predicted to be a fiendish being but is made an agent for good through the intervention of the Church.

Each figure—Merlin, Gawain, Tristram—had his

² Schofield's *English Literature from the Norman Conquest, Etc.*, p. 183.

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period of popularity, and at such time his story was strung out far beyond all limits of artistic symmetry. At times the great Arthur himself was almost forgotten; he became often but an unobtrusive, ever-present influence, serenely allowing others to act under his reflected glow. Then, too, all the women of these stories were of wondrous beauty, dignity, and gentleness; they were arrayed in wondrous apparel; and they dwelt in wondrous castles. These ladies, often fays or supernatural beings, almost always imposed some restrictions upon their passionate earthly lovers—a pledge of secrecy, a promise never to boast of the lady's beauty, the accomplishment of some quest, or the promise that a certain question should never be asked. In the strange story, *La Freine*, for instance, there is something akin to this in the secret of the heroine's origin, and with it other characteristics of the Norman lay, such as the gifts found with the waif, the suffering of long separation and the happy reunion. A maiden is "exposed" by her mother, is found in a hollow ash near a convent, is reared by the nuns, is secretly carried away by a lord who loves her at first sight. After a time the lord's followers demand that he marry a woman of rank. The girl accepts the situation quietly and is so kindly disposed toward the new wife that she puts upon the bridal bed a mantle and a ring that had been found with her in the ash. The bride's mother enters the room, recognizes the relics, and confesses that the girl is her own daughter. The lord is overjoyed; for the "ash-girl" is of the noble blood required for his wife, and he may now take her as his legitimate spouse.

The theme of conjugal unfaithfulness often entered

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into these lays, and as, in the course of time, the stories reached the lower classes, this element often degenerated into vulgarity if not into positive immorality. The popular tale, *The Boy and the Mantle*, shows just such a theme on the downward road. A boy appears at Arthur's court and shows a mantle that will fit only the woman who has been absolutely moral. Guinevere puts it on, but finds to her anger that it seems torn to bits. Kay's wife tries, with no better success. Thus the fun continues until Caradoc's wife tries. One little portion at her foot is slightly wrinkled, whereupon she confesses that she once kissed her lover before marriage. Having been forgiven by a priest, she finds that the garment now fits exceedingly well. The boy next brings a boar's head which only the knife of a knight whose wife had been true could cut. "Knives became scarce; some threw them under the table and said they had none." Caradoc again was the victor. This chastity test by means of a mantle, grail, or other object was an ever-helpful device in the old-time romance, and in at least one story, the *Legend of the Holy Grail*, was the source of a strengthening idealism.

THE TRISTRAM STORY

The story of Sir Tristram, which at length gave up its independence to become a part of the greater legend, was partially—at least in its love theme—of Celtic origin, and Welsh material undoubtedly added much to the making of the whole composition. But in each country it entered it took to itself some national characteristic, and thus became almost universal in its appeal. A version by a Norman poet, Thomas, gave it wide popularity, and the

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tale in one form or another was soon found in German, Italian, French, Old Norse, and English. The German poet, Gottfried von Strassburg, translated it early in the thirteenth century, and his version was an inspiration not only to later German poets but to musicians. By 1200 a poem, *La Folie Tristan*, based on Thomas' work, had been written in England; by 1290 a Middle English poem, *Sir Tristram*, long afterward edited by that modern minstrel, Scott, was well known; and from French versions based on Thomas' book Malory secured much of the material. This Thomas, apparently a contemporary of Crestien, was a man of finer poetic spirit than even the romantic Crestien himself. The latter is cynical; he smiles condescendingly at his own story; his work is beautiful and artistic, but is the product rather of brain than of heart. This Thomas, however, felt what he created; his emotions are contagious; we suffer with him and his characters.

As has been stated, Tristram was long unconnected with Arthur. He was a warrior, the most famous of harpers, a brave musician who made Ysolt, the Irish princess, love him for his harping; he had charm and strength enough to stand by himself. Note but a few lines from the poem (as translated by Miss Weston from Gottfried's work):

"There they [Tristram and Isolt] sat side by side, those two lovers, and told each other tales of those who ere their time had suffered and died for love. They mourned the fate of the sad Dido, of Phyllis of Thrace, and Biblis, whose heart brake for love. With such tales did they beguile the time. But when they would think of them no more, they turned then again to their

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grotto and took the harp, and each in their turn sang to it softly lays of love and longing; now Tristram would strike the harp while Isolt sang the words, then it would be the turn of Isolt to make music while Tristram's voice followed the notes. Full well might it be called the Love Grotto."

King Mark comes to the grotto and finds them sleeping side by side, with a naked sword between them. "He gazed on his heart's delight, Isolt, and deemed that never before had he seen her so fair. She lay sleeping, with a flush as of mingled roses on her cheek, and her red and glowing lips apart. . . . And when he saw how the sunlight fell upon her he feared lest it harm her or awaken her, and so he took grass and leaves and flowers, and covered the window therewith, and spake a blessing on his love, and commended her to God, and went his way, weeping."

Beautiful indeed and strong is the story; but, then, everything was sweeping Arthurward. The poems on Tristram passed into French prose; the mass of narrative connected with him was beginning to lose symmetry and logical sequence; he was becoming but a conventional knight doing the conventional deeds. It was time for Malory to refashion him and give him a definite, even though over-shadowed, place in the presence of Arthur.

Doubtless the simple original story was very old in Great Britain; perhaps the Ysolt theme began in the old saga before the entrance of Christian influence. Unlike classical and many other love-legends, the passion here is inevitable, all-impelling, and all-compelling. Life is one long day of love. Love is here the theme of

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themes; war, court, adventure are all subordinate to it; the legend is an epitome of the sentiment. As we have seen, its influence was far-spread in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. Malory gave it a new birth in the fifteenth; Caxton's press made it easy to obtain; in modern days its popularity has not ceased. Tennyson, Arnold, Swinburne, Wagner, and poets and musicians of minor fame have found it inspiring.

THE LANCELOT STORY

Lancelot, like Tristram, stood, for a time, separate and distinct; but as early as the twelfth century Crestien spoke of him in the story, *Erec*, as one of the three most famous figures at Arthur's court. Near 1170 Crestien himself wrote charmingly about an episode in his adventures, and doubtless the romance took well; for stories about the hero had been popular in France for perhaps a half-century. The Continental romances dealing with his deeds reached great length, but in England they were generally short tales of this or that episode. There was, however, at least one long prose *Lancelot* dealing with Arthur, Gawain, and the Holy Grail, as well as with Lancelot himself. Perhaps the favorite among these adventures was his saving of the queen from imprisonment, disgrace, and probable death, an incident told most pleasantly in Crestien's *Conte de la Charette*. It is, of course, impossible in this present work to give a summary of each and every romance connected with the various heroes; such an effort would make a huge volume. Sufficient to say that the tradition was generally mentioned of his being educated by a strange "Lady of the Lake," who carefully trained

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him in knightly manners; that he loved Arthur's queen, Guinevere, with a steady but sinful love; and that thus, with sorrow in his heart and full realization of his own guilt, he brought ruin to the Round Table. A popular exposition of this last-mentioned phase is *Le Morte Arthur*, a poem of the fourteenth century. In it we find Lancelot in disguise championing Guinevere who is about to be burned because of false accusations. He overcomes her accuser, gains a more passionate love from her, and is entrapped with her by Arthur. Lancelot kills many knights, escapes to his castle, Joyous Garde, once more rescues the queen from being burned, kills Gawain's two brothers in this adventure, and successfully resists Arthur's siege. At length by the Pope's command, he returns Guinevere to her husband, and leaves England to live in peace. Arthur, however, is driven to revenge by Gawain, and is again attacking Lancelot when word comes that Modred has turned traitor at home, and the campaign ceases.

Very early we find the demands of "courtly love" entering—certain rules and procedures that must be followed in love-making, no matter how intimate the couple may have become. In spite of this element which sometimes adds suspense to the adventures of the patient Lancelot and the loving but capricious Guinevere—in spite of the tenderness, the human weakness of their love, and the constancy of it all, the story did not at once gain among English natives the popularity it deserved. A certain strict trait in Anglo-Saxon character, a profound regard for conjugal faithfulness, doubtless prevented a complete sympathy for this guilty love, and only after Malory's labors could the new Eng-

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lish-French race bestow sympathy, admiration, or genuine love upon the passionate couple. Here indeed, as Tennyson says, was a "blended life," a mingling of ruinous sin and noble idealism.

THE GAWAIN STORY

In Gawain we find an almost perfect knight—eloquent, brave, handsome, tender, truthful, always courteous. "Ever he was wont to do more than he agreed and to give more than he promised." Yet, strange as it may seem, we have no separate biography of him such as we possess of the others. Numerous episodes are accounted, perhaps the best known being *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. On New Year's day King Arthur and his knights are at Camelot, awaiting adventures. A giant clad in green and mounted on a green horse enters and offers to allow any one to give him one stroke, which he will return one year later. Gawain accepts, and strikes off the giant's head; but the green knight picks up the head, warns Gawain to meet him at the Green Chapel twelve months later, and rides away. At the appointed time Gawain seeks the place, comes to a castle where he is welcomed by a nobleman, and where on three successive days he is sorely tempted by the nobleman's beautiful wife. He accepts from her, however, only three kisses and a magic girdle, and the three kisses he returns to her husband. Proceeding to the Green Castle, he hears afar the ominous grinding of an ax. The Green Knight meets him; Gawain bows his head for the stroke; and the giant turns the ax so that no harm is done. Then the Green Knight explains that he knew of his wife's wiles and that all had oc-

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curred to prove Gawain the bravest and most virtuous knight in the world. Gawain returns to the Round Table, and relates with shame his deceit about the girdle. His friends count this as nothing, and agree ever afterwards they will wear a girdle of green lace in memory of the exploit.

The Celtic influence in this is clear. The beheading element is connected with Irish legends, where its duplicate may be found in stories of an Irish hero, Cuchulinn. Then, too, a chastity test is added, and this might have had at least three sources: Welsh, French, or Oriental.

As in the case of the other heroes, Gawain's wonders increased as time passed. In *The Turk and Gawain*, another tale known in Britain, Gawain enters the Underworld, tests his strength with giants, and escapes through the assistance of a Turk. This Turk requests as a reward that his head be cut off. As soon as Gawain does the deed the man becomes a handsome knight, and both he and his castle are freed from magic. In another story, the *Adventures of Arthur at the Tarn Wadling* (c. 1350) we find a mingling of Saxon seriousness and morality with French refinement. Guinevere and Gawain, left behind during a hunt, suddenly perceive a horrible, shrieking ghost, covered with toads and snakes, rushing towards them. Gawain demands the spirit's purpose or wish, and finds the ghost to be the mother of Guinevere, suffering for the sins in the flesh. The mother implores the daughter to mend her ways, and declares that thirty trentals of masses will relieve her own horrible condition. The next day while Arthur and his men are still at this place (Tarn Wadling)

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Galleroun, whose property had been given to Gawain, approaches and desires a combat to settle the ownership. Gawain and he fight, much to the anxiety of Guinevere and Galleroun's lady; but at length Gawain wins, and then relinquishes all claim to the land. Galleroun weds his lady, and Guinevere has the great number of masses sung, and thus all ends happily at Tarn Wadling. Thus, little by little, widely different incidents linked themselves to one character.

By this time, as may be seen, Gawain has become fully attached to Arthur, and henceforth we find him the king's right-hand man. *The Wedding of Gawain* would be but another proof of his whole-hearted loyalty to his king. He marries a filthy, horrible hag to save Arthur's life, and with deep disgust he enters with her into the bedchamber. There, however, she suddenly changes into a beautiful lady, and Gawain receives only joy for his sacrifice.

This Gawain, ever brave, ever active in some good work, has been most attractive to the English nature. He was true as steel; he was physically brave; he was mentally alert; he was morally wholesome. The British would not willingly let him die; one book concerning him, the *Singular Adventures*, declared emphatically that he was still living in the reign of Henry VIII.

THE MERLIN STORY

Merlin—the wizard! What a story of intrigue, what a mingling of good and evil forces center about him! Long before Geoffrey wrote his *History* Merlin was known to the Welsh as a prophet, loosely, if at all, connected with Arthur's career. Geoffrey brings him be-

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fore us a boy whose birth is mysterious, his mother, a nun, having no idea how or when he was conceived. The king of the land is told that a certain tower he is erecting will stand only after being sprinkled with the blood of a boy who never had a father. Merlin is brought before him and instantly tells the cause of the tower's weakness. He is gifted with foreseeing power, with a knowledge of all mysteries. He moves by magic the huge stones for Stonehenge from Ireland; by magic he enables King Uther to gain access to the lady Ygerna, and thus becomes accountable for the birth of Arthur. Among the Continental writers there was a belief that Merlin was an own son of the devil; but later scribes removed this slight hereditary defect by having him baptized the moment he is born, and thus the wizard, although stooping to many Satanical tricks, is almost invariably on the side of good. Robert de Borron, who improved on Geoffrey by giving us a connected life of Merlin, was probably the author who invented this device of hasty christening. The child, whether of devil or human father, was indeed a wonder. When barely eighteen months old he defended his mother against an accusation of adultery and proved the judge's own mother to be the guilty party; at five he was chief counsellor to the king.

It should, therefore, not be at all surprising that lengthy poetical and prose romances gathered about him in France, Germany, and England. Before 1290 some Englishman, possibly a priest, had written a long and strong poem entitled *Arthur and Merlin*, while the wizard's love affairs and the tradition that he had intimate relations with a fay—doubtless the or-

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igin of the cunning Ninian—were the inspiration of numerous lays and stories. The odds and ends of magic gathered about him. Even when his course was run and, with all his wisdom, he had not been wise enough to resist the wiles of a woman, the ancient Welsh conception of an air-castle came forward, and furnished a means for his eternal captivity and his eternal sleep.

Great was the fame and popularity of Merlin of Wales. He was a prophet, and his prophecies always favored the Welsh; he was a magician and his tricks ever overcame evil. He was another figure that the people did not gladly let die. As late as the Great Plague of 1665, according to Defoe, fortune-tellers still displayed a head or picture of Merlin as a symbol of their profession.

THE HOLY GRAIL STORY

There came at length to the knights of the Round Table one great idealistic motive—the quest of the Holy Grail. Around this worshipful object centered all adventures, all desires, all high ambitions. It lifted the legend out of the sphere of ordinary romantic adventures and re-created it as one of the loftiest symbolical literatures created by man. “Through the stories of the Grail the land of Britain was glorified as the first seat of the Church of Christ, and the abiding-place for ages of the most precious relics of His cross and passion.” The adventures might be commonplace incidents in the career of the conventional knight; but nevermore could mere personal ambition or love of victory and praise be the guiding motive. The magic bowl or cup was indeed but an old familiar figure in Celtic

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lore; but, once connected with the sufferings of the Saviour, it bestowed a purity, a delicate strain of tender devotion, and a holy light not found in any other cycle.

The Irish, Welsh, or Celtic Grail was at first a marvelous food-producing vessel; but probably before the close of the eleventh century it had become associated with the cup in which Joseph of Arimathea caught Christ's blood, and the ancient tradition that Joseph had brought Christianity to England and that Glastonbury, where Arthur had sometime been, was the first seat of the British Church, made the association plausible and easy. Joseph had been cast into prison for giving Jesus a decent burial, and the cup had sustained him there forty years. Then, set at liberty, he had wandered far and wide, displaying the holy vessel on a table which was to be the model of the famous Round Table. In English the versions of the story were not numerous, there being little more than a few lives of Joseph and the account by Malory. For three centuries before Malory, however, there had been lengthy French poems dealing with the theme, and these were undoubtedly based on folk-lore of hoary antiquity.

When Walter Map entered with his *Queste del St. Graal*, he gave through his delicate art a prominence to the theme that it had not hitherto enjoyed in the Round Table legend. Walter Map knew that his work was significant, that it would have a national importance. Henry II, who desired the support of the Welsh and who had rebuilt the church at Glastonbury and had claimed that Arthur's grave had been discovered there, praised, favored, and advertised the romances of the talented Walter.

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Then, from the great mass of French material, that genius, Malory, selected this incident and that, and merged the cup-theme for all time with the Authurian story. A wonderfully dignified legend it was by this time, picturesque and strong, filled with lofty idealism, longings, temptations, sufferings, defeats, and victories. There are stains of infidelity and unfaithfulness, tinges of human weakness; but through it all there is enough of the symbolism of the Christian struggle toward perfection to carry it safely down through the ages.

THE MORTE D'ARTHUR STORY

It was an ideal that ruined the Round Table—the ideal of the Grail. The knights became star-gazers. With their heads in the heavens, they forgot to keep their feet planted solidly upon the earth. Busily engaged in the high and noble search for the ideal, they did not discover until too late the seeds of destruction planted in their midst; in the search for perfection they forgot to make perfect the every-day, commonplace deeds of life. And Arthur, the impractical star-gazer, suffered unto the death because of his visions; his air-castles were not built upon the Rock of Common Sense. And thus we come to the *Morte d'Arthur* story.

At first the term was applied simply to the episode dealing with the actual ending of Arthur, but in time the closing scene was extended backward until the words came to mean the entire story of his life. The tradition of his last struggle for Britain must have very early developed a literary form; for by 1330 we find a four-thousand-line Middle English poem, *Morte Arthur*, in which Lancelot, Gawain, and other figures of the Round

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Table enter, and a detailed and stirring description of the last hours of the "blameless prince." Among the Normans the story was expanded; by 1350 it had spread through Scotland; and we find at least one worthy poem, entitled simply *Arthur*, imbedded in a dull Latin chronicle. And, now, as each nation, England, France, Scotland, or Wales, began to use the romance as a means of self-glorification, as a means of pouring forth bitter hatred for an enemy, incident after incident was placed before the death scene, until, as has been said, the entire legend gained the now immortal title, *Morte d'Arthur*. And it was Malory who made it immortal. With the fine discrimination of a true artist, he culled from the world of literature massed about the king, and brought him forth England's darling.

It was a prolific period—those Norman centuries in England. The innumerable currents of the world's traditions flowed into these islands; Britain became a land of dreams. The legends of Greek and barbarian, Jew and Gentile, Christian and heathen, met and mingled here, and, ever above all and drawing all to it like a magnet, stood the magical figure of Arthur. The age was indeed "the Ocean of the Rivers of Story."

CHAPTER IV

THE FICTION OF THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

NATIONAL CHANGES

PREVIOUS to 1360 there had been in England a thorough but not sudden or violent breaking up and reshaping of institutions, customs, language and literature. The conservativeness of the Anglo-Saxon nature and the fact that the Norman rulers in England still held large possessions in France retarded the nation in the process of becoming a perfect unity; and that final unity came only when the Norman had given up practically everything and the native Englishman little or nothing. Now, however, after 1350 political and intellectual slavery were dwindling away under the information, new ideas, alertness, and confidence gained through war, commerce, and travel. The peasant had now become an important factor in all struggles. The common folk were constantly advancing, and their representatives in Parliament grasped more and more power. In 1330 Edward defeated the Scotch through the aid of the humbler soldiers; the battles of Crécy in 1346 and Poitiers in 1356 were won by English yeomen; the Black Death from 1348 to 1369 made laborers so scarce that they could demand a comfortable living wage; in 1381 Wat Tyler's Rebellion revealed anew

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their growing ambition. Feudalism and chivalry were dying hard; but the end was not far off and was hastened by the contemptible conduct of the higher classes. At Crécy the French knights cut down the foot-soldiers in front of them so that they themselves might be the first to display their valor. After the Black Death an attempt was made in England to bind the workmen to the noblemen's estates. A lack of regard for the feelings of the common man caused the Tyler and Ball revolts, and, though the brief campaigns were failures, they gained for labor a greater share of national regard and respect. The Church, instead of aiding such classes, was more nearly a hindrance. But through the passionate words of such reformers as Langland and Wickliffe a wide interest in religious duties and rights was created, and the Church itself was given a new life.

These circumstances, together with the increase of commerce and the wide travels of English sailors and the consequent increase of broadening information, made the last years of the fourteenth century a period rather akin to the Elizabethan Era in its energy, ambitions, and intense desire for self-expression. In 1362 Langland's *Piers Plowman* appeared, in 1366 Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose*, in 1387 the *Canterbury Tales*, in 1393 Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, and near 1400 Mandeville's *Travels*. Great numbers of French words were admitted during the first half of the century, and even such a prominent writer as Gower seems to have been in doubt as to what language would survive as a literary medium, and therefore wrote in Latin, French, and English. The example of Chaucer, Langland, and Wickliffe, however, did much toward settling the ques-

tion, while the immense importance of London inevitably made the East Midland English the national tongue.

It was indeed a picturesque day. Along the roads leading out from London might be found innumerable fakirs, medicine-men, mountebanks, pardoners, begging brothers, tricksters of every sort. The quacks offered you the identical powder that had made Venus and Helen beautiful; a friend of the fakir had found it in the ruins of Troy. Friars showed you cases of pigs' bones and swore that they were saints' bones. A piece of linen stained with walnut juice was the identical napkin that covered the dead Saviour's face. Sleek-faced churchmen galloped past with bags of pardons "hot from Rome"—pardons that forgave you all the sins you ever had committed and all you should commit for a certain time in the future—all this for a consideration, of course. Astrologers offered to tell you what your "fortune star" was, and alchemists assured you that they would soon discover the "philosopher's stone," the element that would turn all matter into gold. These alchemists were men of mystery; they spoke and wrote a language of deep and hidden meaning. Hear the gold-producing formula of the fourteenth century alchemist, Armand de Villeneuve:

"Know, my son, that in this chapter I shall teach thee the preparation of the Philosophers' Stone.

"As the world was lost through woman, it is necessary also that it be saved by her. For this reason, take the mother, place her in bed with her eight sons; watch her; she must do strict penance until she be washed of all her sins. Then she will give to the world a son who

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will sin. Signs have appeared in the sun and moon; seize this son and chastise him, so that pride may not ruin him. This done, replace him in his bed and when thou seest that he is in his right mind seize him again and give him to the Jews to be crucified. The Sun being thus crucified, the Moon will no longer be seen, the veil of the temple rent, and there will be a great earthquake. Then it is time to use much fire, and a spirit that shall deceive the whole world will be seen to arise.”¹

What does this all mean? “Take the mother.” Take mercury, the mother of all metals; place her in bed, the crucible, with her eight sons, lead, iron, tin, etc.; watch her closely till all has melted. She will give a son to the world in the form of a yellow surface or coating, which must be purified into true gold. The signs in the sun and moon are the colors of gold and silver. Grasping the gold means taking the gold from the crucible and chastising or beating it. Then, having been replaced in its bed and having regained its senses by being remelted, it is given to the Jews by being treated with niter and carbon. Then there will be a great disturbance in the crucible and the metallic crust or veil will be rent, and by the use of much fire the antimony will give forth a “spirit” in the form of scintillant light. This spirit, forming a mass at the bottom of the vessel, contains the gold.

Against such quackery, as well as against the lustful lives of the monks, nuns, and pardon-selling agents, Wickliffe thundered seemingly in vain. His followers, known as Lollards, were bitterly persecuted early in the

¹ *Cosmos*. March 28, 1908.

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fifteenth century, and the universities, siding with the traditional views, aided in such persecution and stultified themselves by requiring rigid conformity among the students. Learning sank; the land was full of foolish teachers. Physicians without a degree or regular training administered violent poisons to patients or to dummies who fortunately sometimes took the place of the sick in receiving the nostrums. As we read Chaucer's *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales* we are apt to wonder if the nation had fallen into moral rottenness. The "sumnour" had authority over the girls in the parish and had made many a marriage at his own cost; the reeve became rich on his master's money and then lent the bankrupt nobleman this wealth at ruinous interest; the merchants were smugglers and sometimes pirates; the miller had a "golden thumb" in taking toll; the monk wore a love-knot, and the nun a brooch with the inscription: *Amor vincit omnia*.

French examples had not greatly changed the manners of the middle and low classes. Chaucer notes the remarkable facts that the nun did not snatch for food at the table, did not thrust her fingers deep into the common gravy dish, and wiped her lip so clean that she left no skimming of grease in her cup when she drank. Under the table the dogs gnawed loudly on the bones thrown to them as the meal progressed, while on the backs of the chairs or sometimes on the table falcons perched and snatched at the bread. The jokes and tales were often most vulgar; but the women seem to have listened without protest.

Secretly at all times there was great discontent among all classes. Henry IV, though not in the direct line of

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succession, had seized the throne and had thus aroused the ire of a number of the aristocrats. Henry V avoided trouble at home by causing trouble abroad. The great battle of Agincourt occurred, and France seemed a dying kingdom. Then came Joan of Arc and lifted once more the hopes of England's ancient enemy. The War of the Roses followed with its years of bloodshed, and the aristocratic class was almost annihilated. Suffering it undoubtedly caused; but it once more asserted the importance of the common folk and destroyed for all time the iniquitous feudal system.

But looking only at the surface of society in those early days, one would never have judged that discontent was wide-spread. The old ballads, now at the height of their popularity, were heard by every roadside; in the towns the mystery and miracle plays attracted the multitude; the harp, the lute, and the bagpipe made every procession gay. Music and song and story were as popular as ever. The musicians played in the castle at meal-time; four hundred and twenty-six of them performed at one wedding of the day; the minstrels were still so important that in the fifteenth century Parliament condemned them as the cause of a Welsh rebellion. Their songs were by no means always uplifting. With the jugglers and acrobats they sometimes presented the Salome dance in a manner that would have shocked even the modern metropolitan audience, and even as late as the sixteenth century Phillip Stubbes could truthfully say in his *Anatomy of Abuses*: "Every town, citie, and country is full of these minstrelles to pype up a dance to the devill." Their ballads and narratives frequently had, however, a demo-

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cratic tone, and on occasions of popular political movements they undoubtedly played an important part in voicing the sentiments of the expressionless multitude. Thus, John Ball took as the text of his famous speech at Blackheath in 1381 the old minstrel song:

When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?

LITERARY CONDITIONS

After the death of Chaucer the era was not exceedingly fruitful in literature; it was a time of rest and waiting before the coming of the Renaissance. We shall see, however, that fiction still had its numerous devotees. None of them, it is true, could tell a story as Chaucer could; but nearly all wrote fairly interesting if not strikingly original narratives.

For the most part, the same old romantic themes were being worked over and over, becoming more tiresome and more stale with each successive revision. Here and there such geniuses as Malory and Caxton added a fresh touch of art to the ancient themes; but in the main the repeated versions were scarcely worth the telling. So far adventure had been the principal and almost the only element in fiction, and the lesser spirits of the age still failed to perceive the need of the new element soon to enter; namely, *character portrayal*. "The creations of romantic fiction were unreal beings distinguished by different names, by the different insignia of their shields, and by the degree in which they possessed the special qualities which formed the ideal of medieval times. The story of their lives was but a

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series of adventures strung together without plan, the overflow of an active but ungoverned imagination.”²

A few men, however, as has been indicated, saw the new need and answered it. The figures in Langland's *Piers Plowman* frequently act like real men and women in real life; the jolly company that Chaucer led to Canterbury was composed of living, thinking souls, human mixtures of the earthy and the divine. Indeed, the *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales* is one of the greatest character sketches in all literature. This was truly a new note in English letters. These men and women do, indeed, tell some of the old-time stories; but the story-tellers themselves speak with the modern spirit. They are not a set type; there is friction as well as fiction in the group. No longer are the knights and the warriors bold the only persons worthy of consideration. The preacher, the merchant, the scholar, the lawyer, the merry widow, even the miller and the cook are brought before us to tell of life from their view-point.

The common people had risen through the expensiveness and self-destructiveness of this very institution of chivalry, and they dared to scoff openly at the old idea of a divinity's resting in Arthurian or any other kind of knights. Robin Hood probably was more to their liking, and their stories were frequently tinged with democracy and almost with rebellion. Robin Hood was applauded for beating fat, avaricious churchmen, while Langland dared to condemn those of the Church and State who used their power to oppress the humble.

² Tuckerman: *History of English Prose Fiction*, p. 42.

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Tales of wonder were, of course, still welcome. "Friar Bacon," possibly founded on traditions of the philosopher, Roger Bacon, of the thirteenth century, made a brazen head which could talk, and he had intended to put a wall of brass about England. His servant, Miles, tried to imitate him; the results were ludicrous. Virgil had become a magician, and stories of his tricks abounded. By black art he put out the fire of Rome; he made a lamp that would burn eternally. Even with so great a figure, however, the ridiculous enters. In love with a Roman lady, he persuades her to lower a basket from her window to pull him up; but she—cruel creature—leaves him suspended half-way up, to be the object of the city's sarcastic remarks. Tales of the Nine Worthies, spoken of in our previous study, still held their popularity, and a book about them appeared from Caxton's press. Stories of transformation into beasts became perhaps more numerous than in previous centuries. *William of Palerne*, translated from the French about 1350, might be offered as a typical example of this theme. The werewolf in this tale, heir to the throne of Spain, is thus transformed by the malicious art of his stepmother. He saves a king from murder, swims with him across the Straits of Messina, helps him in his love affairs, and is rewarded by having the charm lifted by the king's intervention.

Stories of devils or imps were still retaining an audience. "Friar Rush" was just such a mischievous rascal as would please the rustic listeners by the winter fireside. He gained admittance to a monastery, threw the master cook into a pot of boiling water, became chief cook himself, prepared such delicious food that

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the monks were fast degenerating into gluttons, and was discovered just in time to save the institution from utter ruin. Indeed, the churchmen still made zealous use of such stories of the devil and his helpers. It was a great day for "examples," as any reader of Chaucer and Gower knows. Some of the sermons of the era were but groups of examples or tales clinging feebly to a text. Robert of Brunne's well-known book, *Handlyng Synne*, has throughout its 12,600 lines a multitude of just such stories gathered about the Seven Deadly Sins; Gower did not disdain proving his points in the same manner in his *Confessio Amantis*. A specimen from *Handlyng Synne* may be enlightening. Some ruffians desecrating the churchyard were cursed by the abbot, and, having paid little attention to His Reverence, were bewitched so that they were compelled to dance unceasingly in rain, snow, or heat for a whole year. The Church encouraged such rubbish. The *Ghost of Guy* (c. 1350), a tale from Latin sources and one used by the priests, told of a French burgess whose ghost came back and gave marvelous information about Purgatory, all of which information agreed, of course, with the teachings of the Church. Especially did this ghost declare that it could be saved from Hell by masses. The *Child of Bristow* relates how a covetous father was saved from the same permanent and uncomfortable residence by his son's returning the ill-gotten wealth, and having masses said.

By 1400 innumerable narratives from the East had reached England. The *Story of the Seven Sages* or the *Seven Wise Masters*, for instance, was widely known among even the common audiences. Here, the son of a

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king having been placed under the instruction of the wise men, they discover by magic that the boy's life is in danger and that his only hope lies in his being absolutely silent for a certain time. The boy, sent home, enrages his father by his refusal to talk. One of the queens then makes love to him; he reproaches her bitterly and is silent again; the woman declares him guilty of making insulting proposals to her; the king resolves to execute him. Then the philosophers enter and tell stories containing warnings against hasty punishment; the king tells one in reply to each of these; in some versions the queen takes a hand in the narrating, and thus the tales and "examples" merrily accumulate, and the boy lives on.

The *Gesta Romanorum*, a treasure store for medieval story-tellers, came into existence, in England at least, toward the close of the thirteenth century. Many indeed were the copies of it scattered throughout Great Britain; its popularity was scarcely equaled by that of any other writing of the following hundred years.

Looking over the chapters of the English version, we discover a mixture of feudal chivalry and Oriental extravagance. Here we find King Lear in his Northern loneliness, here the Shylock plot with its Southern cunning, here classical heroes, untrue to history but exceedingly interesting as figures of fiction. Originally intended for the use of the clergy as further "examples," the stories generally close with a plain but rather irrelevant moral. One might truthfully revise the old saying so as to state that if the story had the smallpox there would not be the least need of vaccinating the moral. Indeed, it is at times a triumph of human in-

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genuity—this grafting a lesson upon such an entirely different tale. A man finds his neighbor weeping. When asked the cause of his tears, the neighbor replies that each of his three successive wives had hanged herself on a certain tree in the garden. Instantly the visitor eagerly begs a sprig of that tree to plant before his own house, and frantically urges the widower to distribute slips of it throughout the entire neighborhood that all the unlucky married men may gain freedom or new wives. The tree, “my brethren,” is the cross on which you are to hang and destroy the three sinful wives, Pride, Lust, and Covetousness. Of course the preacher could change the names of the wives to suit the particular vices of his parish.

Some of the stories have the weird effect of the *Arabian Nights*. A merchant, entertained at a nobleman’s house, is enraptured with the beauty of the wife. To his consternation, he finds at supper that, though the others seated at the table are given rich food on golden plates, the lady has but a bit of coarse meat served in a human skull. When he is taken to his room, he discovers in a corner two dead bodies suspended by their arms. The next morning the nobleman explains that the skull is the head of a duke who had been discovered in the wife’s embraces; he compelled her to eat from it to teach her modesty and faithfulness. The bodies in the bedroom were those of two kinsmen who had been murdered, and these he visited daily to keep burning his desire for vengeance. Still another specimen of the weird quality may be helpful. A Roman statue, which stretched forth its middle finger, bore the inscription, “Strike here.” A clerk one day discovered

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the shadow of the finger at some distance, dug into the earth at this point, found a flight of stairs, and, going far down, came upon a king and queen seated in a great hall. The couple neither spoke nor noticed him. In one corner he saw a huge carbuncle, in another a man with a bended bow. On this silent archer's forehead were the words: "I am what I am; nothing can escape my dart, not even yonder carbuncle which shines so bright." In another room the clerk found beautiful women weaving; but these also spoke not a word. In the stable were splendid horses, but when he touched them they turned to stone. The young man, deeming it best to have some proof to take back to earth, took from a table a golden cup and a golden knife. That instant the bow shot; the carbuncle was shattered; all was darkness; and the clerk, dismayed and lost, wandered hither and thither through the great cavern until death overcame him.

All such stories possessed, of course, their religious bearing, and most of the other long collections were written or edited for the same purpose. The *Cursor Mundi*, an immense series of the fourteenth century, wrought out at times a symbolism marvelous in its ingenuity. The cross, for example, was made of three trees, the cypress, the cedar and the pine, which had grown from three pips given Seth by the guardian angel of Heaven and placed under Adam's tongue when this father of man was buried. These same three trees had had a part in the building of the Temple; they had made their influence felt through all Hebrew history. Religion was an extremely live subject at the

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time, though the carelessness of the lower classes might cause us to believe the contrary.

It must not be thought that romance died quickly during the fourteenth or fifteenth century. Indeed more stories of the romantic type were revised, copied, or reëdited than in any other period of English literature. This was the day of Malory, whose *Morte d'Arthur*, issued by Caxton, is a conclusive evidence of the abiding popularity of such narratives. But very few new stories of this kind were being composed. *William of Palerne*, of about 1350, *Morte Arthure*, of the late fourteenth century, *Arthur of Little Britain*, *Paris and Vienne*, *Valentine and Orson*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—such romances containing much of the old and little of the new, gained an audience and held it even into the sixteenth century.

The author of *Cursor Mundi* was doubtless correct when he wrote early in the fourteenth century:

Men lykyn jestis for to here
And romans rede in divers manere
Of Alexandre the conqueroure,
Of Julius Cesar the emperoure,
Of Grece and Troy, the strong stryf,
There many a man lost his lyf,
Of Brute that baron bold of hond,
The first Conqueroure of Englonde,
Of King Artour,

and a host of others. But the fact remains that in spite of the interest still felt in these old stories,

The twilight that surrounds
The borderland of old romance

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was passing away; such themes were being brought under the searching light of a more intellectual day, and were being found lacking in reality, in human character.

Fiction was now beginning to break through the narrow channel of verse. The poetical romance had already given way in Italy to the prose romance, and soon after Boccaccio had set the example, numerous *novellieri*, writers of prose tales, came into the greatly broadened and promising field—men such as Cinthio, Bandello and Straparola, whose work became well known in England and was copied later into such collections as Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*. The influence of Italian fiction upon English fiction from this time forth can scarcely be overestimated. Boccaccio's books—such collections as his *Casibus Virorum et Feminarum Illustrium*, his *De Claris Mulieribus*, and later his *Decameron*, became famous throughout Europe and were eagerly read in Great Britain. Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* and *Legend of Good Women* were modeled upon them; Lydgate's *Falls of Princes* imitated the *Casibus*; Gower, Barbour, Occleve and many other minor writers were under obligations to this highly original Italian. Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso began to be known, appreciated, and imitated in the Northern country. "These," says Godwin in his *Life of Chaucer*, "were the tales with which the youthful fancy of Chaucer was fed; these were the visionary scenes by which his genius was awakened; these were the acts and personages on which his boyish thoughts were at liberty to ruminate forever."

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CHAUCER

The work of this man, Geoffrey Chaucer, was the result of centuries of English story-telling. The love of fiction was in his blood; his day called eagerly for narrative; circumstances made story-telling his life's chief activity. Born in London about 1340, the son of a wine-merchant, he was so fortunate as to enter the service of Prince Lionel and to advance from plane to plane until he became intimate with the highest royalty of the land. Thus he came to know English society in its every stage and phase, and no man knew better how to judge his audience and fit his story to their level of understanding. While a mere boy, he was taken prisoner in France, and was even then deemed valuable enough to warrant the king's payment of no small ransom. Valet and squire to Edward III, special agent to Italy at least twice, supervisor of customs at London from 1381 to 1386, a member of Parliament in 1386, in charge of the King's Works in 1389, frequently the recipient of pensions, gifts, and other royal favors, traveler, student, close observer, man of both the world and the library, he probably stood intellectually the peer of any Englishman before Elizabethan days and the superior of any other writer of the fourteenth century in genius and genuine understanding of humanity.

Consider the scope and the variety of his *Canterbury Tales*: the *Tale of the Knight*, a story of Palamon and Arcite, derived from Boccaccio's *Teseide*; the *Tale of the Miller*, a story of Absolon, Nicholas, and Alisoun, a carpenter's wife, the plot of unknown source; the *Reeve's Tale*, imitating a French fabliau; the *Man of*

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Law's Tale, a history of the pious Constance, from the French of Trivet; the *Shipman's Tale*, a story from *Decameron*, of a merchant, a wife and a wicked monk; the *Prioress' Tale* from the French of Gautier de Coinci, telling how a child was killed by the Jews; the *Monk's Tale*, presenting the "tragedies" of Lucifer, Adam, Samson, Hercules, Nebuchadnezzar, Nero, Cæsar, etc.; the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, the story of Chanticleer, found in *Roman de Renart* and in the writings of Marie de France. This is but a glimpse at the contents and sources of the great collection. Here are plots and characters enough for any number of modern novels. One hardly knows where to begin in this treasure-picture. Perhaps, however, it would be wise simply to describe briefly two or three of the tales that pleased the pilgrims and show how they differ from the form of narrative preceding them and what they foretell for English fiction.

The *Pardoner's Tale* might be cited as an example of the mingling of the old and the new in Chaucer. Here we have a story that could easily have served as a plot for one of the morality plays of the day. Simple, unadorned, almost grotesque in its childlike frankness, gruesome in its details and general lesson, it possesses at the same time that chief asset of modern fiction—*characterization*. The figures in it are not of the same class as those of the old romances; they are not mere types; they are living, plausible human beings. Three wicked toppers swear to overcome Death, and, going forth to seek him, meet an old man who tells them that he has just seen Death up yonder lane. The cronies, going there, find a heap of treasures, and, re-

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joicing over their discovery, they decide that the youngest companion shall go back to town and secure some wine while the other two guard the riches. The youngest resolves to rid himself of his partners and therefore puts poison into the wine, while at the same time the other two resolve to waylay and murder him as he returns. This they do, and then, gloating over their wealth, they drink the wine and sink down in death. Thus, indeed, did they all meet Death, as the old man had promised them.

This has, in truth, the medieval religious tone. A spiritual lesson is taught with vivid, almost brutal, simplicity. Yet, the talk, the thoughts, the descriptions, the deeds of the four or five characters give them a "humanness" that causes them to stand forth as distinct individuals on a real and very earthy earth. Then, too, the pardoner who tells this story is none of "ye olden knights"; he is decidedly up-to-date, in short, a rascal. Doubtless as he told the tale, he assumed at times the solemn, singsong air of the sermons of the day, and doubtless, too, the moral he derived from the narrative was not to seek treasures for oneself, but to give them to churchmen, especially poor pardoners. He displays his fake relics; he hints of their power; he is an abominable knave. But it is his business to tell moral tales so well that the listener's soul will be shaken with fear and his pocketbook emptied into the churchman's hand. It is an impressive narrative, gruesome in its incidents, strong in its portrayal, realistic as the most modern realist could desire. It is a far cry from this to the old love romances of the Round Table.

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The *Nun's Priest's Tale*, though dealing with a theme older by far than the Arthurian Legend, has all the sprightliness, naturalness of manner and conversation, and distinction of characters that one could expect in a modern short story. It deals with the ancient feud between the fox and the cock, always enemies, always tricking each other. The Æsopian fables with their inevitable moral had penetrated every nook and corner of civilized Europe; the animal epic, such as *Reynard the Fox*, had enlarged from age to age; and Chaucer was but answering a popular craving when he told with such humorous and human touches the troubles of the ancient foes.

The cock had lived in happiness under the favor, care, and admiration of his seven wives; food was plentiful; there was no danger; chanticleer's voice shook the morning air. At length, however, evil dreams of a strange monster began to come to the husband. He shivered and cried out in his sleep, and nestled closer to his favorite wife. When he told her of his dreams she was all anxiety; surely his liver was out of order, and she must prepare him some medicine at once. She scoffed at his superstitious belief in dreams, and declared that she could never love a coward; but he, on his part, maintained with proper masculine dignity the significance of such visions, and silenced her by quoting numerous ancient and eminent authorities.

Macrobeus that writ th' avisioun
In Affrike of the worthy Cipioun,
'Affermeth dremes, and seith that they been
Warning of things that men after seen.
And forther-more, I pray you loketh wel

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In th' olde testament, of Daniel,
If he held dremes any vanitee.
Reed eke of Joseph and ther shul ye see
Where dremes ben somtyne (I say not alle)
Warning of things that shul after falle.

In time the dream came true. The strange monster, the fox, appeared and captured him, and only by the merest chance did he escape death. The moral is, of course, that man should never heed woman's advice.

This is a little cameo of lowly life. How many human touches are found in this story of the barnyard: the dignified masculine superiority of the rooster, the feminine materialism (if gallantry, permit me to say it) of the hen, the love and anxiety of it all, the sweetness of domestic life, the charm of handsome manhood for beautiful womanhood. These ideas—except the last—are so exceedingly rare in previous literature. This, again, in its realism is a far step from the conventional form of the old romances. Chaucer's feelings are always with his heroes, but he never becomes so enamored with them as to make them superhuman. The touch of humor is always close at hand. This comparison of great heroes and deeds to the petty creatures and doings of the barnyard—the classic gods and goddesses to chanticleer and his hens—is too ludicrous to miss appreciation. The solemn display of learning by the cock, his citations from ancient history and biography, his knowledge of modern legends and literature, his familiarity with Biblical lore,—these bits of absurdity give the tale a piquancy not known in earlier English fiction. With it all goes a plot skilfully arranged and leading unerringly to the climax, and, unlike the romance upon

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which Chaucer's boyhood was fed, it ends when it ought to end.

Those romances of his boyhood—none knew better than Chaucer the defects of their construction. The *Tale of Sir Thopas* was one of the most effective blows ever given them in English literature. Here the storyteller begins the same old account of chivalrous adventures. The knight rides through the forest, and at length, having dismounted to rest, he has the usual dream: an elf queen is to be his wife. Then he finds himself in fairy-land; he is met by a giant, but escapes; adorned with a lily as a symbol of his purity, he speeds back to meet the giant. Just here the host stops the tale with an outburst of disgust.

No more of this, for goddes dignitee,
Quod oure hoste, "for thou makest me
So wery of thy verray lewednesse
That, also wisely god my soule blesse,
Myn eres aken of thy drasty speches!

We feel like saying, "Amen." There is no telling when and where that story might have stopped. All the giants and knights and fairy ladies in romance-land might have been brought in, and perhaps the arrival at Thomas à Becket's shrine might have been but an interruption and not its end.

The fact that not a lettered man, such as the clerk of Oxford, but a rough, unlearned man of the world, like the innkeeper, objected, was proof that the common folk were growing weary of this old style of narrative. The *trouvères* had failed; their incoherent, hackneyed plots had fallen short of all effectiveness; and the people demanded something having more likeness to the

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men and women who lived and thought and did enough deeds for seventy years and then died. Human character and analysis of human character—that was the new cry; never again could mere adventure long prove sufficient.

It must not be thought, however, that Chaucer could not use the old themes. The *Knight's Tale* is as truly a romance of chivalry as any portion of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*; while *Troilus and Criseyde*, dealing with a plot used scores of times by early romancers, became in this Englishman's hands one of the most artistic, beautiful, and, at the same time, convincing stories in all the world's literature. Why did it become so? Because Chaucer realizes that the emotions of no two human souls are exactly the same, and he proceeds to give such an analysis of characters as English literature had never seen before. Here is no mere external description of man and woman; the human heart and its workings are laid bare before us; we are made aware of the complexity of human existence. In this story of the tender-hearted, weak-willed Criseyde we find a new realization of the depths and meanings of life,—a realization that seems never to have come to those innumerable poets before Chaucer who told of knights bold and ladies fair. To Chaucer "the world and human character are no simple things, nor are actions to be judged as the fruit of one motive alone." He has gained an insight into that which was practically unknown to his predecessors—human psychology. In his stories giants are not all bad nor knights all good. The souls he lays bare are the true mixture of earth and spirit. We have passed from conventionalities to individualism; "none

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else of that day can bring the actual world of men and women before us with the movement of a Florentine procession-picture and with a color and a truth of detail that anticipate the great Dutch masters of painting."³

The poem, *Troilus and Criseyde*, might almost be cited as the first English novel. Its story is full of incidents; but it is not mastered by them. Character makes its plot, and not plot the characters. "The motions of the human heart, that is his real subject, not the march of armies; from the moment of its birth the English novel is psychological."⁴

This is the chief importance, then, of Chaucer in the development of English fiction. Writers before him had observed mainly the deeds of men; he observed the motives, the thoughts, the soul-conflicts of humanity. Never again can the type figure gain supremacy in narrative; every character must be an individual possessing his own peculiar traits, personal eccentricities, and particular views of life. All this means another excellent trait—*limits* to a narrative. Mere adventures—battles, hunts, discoveries—might go on forever or as long as the writer's inventive power lasts; but crises in the human soul are happily of short duration; they must at length end, and with them the story. Reasonable limitations to plot, naturalness, the study of motives, analysis of the heart, psychology—these are Chaucer's chief gifts to English fiction.

³ Ward: *English Poets*, Vol. I, p. 11.

⁴ Jusserand: *Lit. Hist. of the English People*, Vol. I, p. 303.

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LANGLAND

There was living in the same London with Chaucer a writer whom he never met, but who he would have admitted possessed an unusual power in character portrayal. That man was a churchman, long, gaunt, hungry-looking, gloomy, proud William Langland, the author of the *Vision of Piers Plowman* (c. 1362). Little enough is known of Langland's life. It is believed that he was born in Shrewsbury near the Welsh border, about 1331, and was of such low family that he escaped bondage only through the patronage of some man of high rank. He probably attended school at Malvern, and his residence alternated between this place and London during his mature years. He was never a systematic scholar—Jusserand calls him a “vagabond by nature, both mentally and physically”—but he managed to pick up all sorts of odds and ends of knowledge, and during his struggle for existence, learned with bitter accuracy the traits of humanity. A disappointed man—one who failed probably because he lacked will-power and concentration—he labored for his bread by praying and singing in one of the numerous chantries established for saving the souls of dead sinners. This monotonous performance of the same old rites day after day for a soul in which he perhaps had no mortal interest was a dreary enough business; but in addition his poverty, his unhappy marriage, and his thwarted ambition must at times have made the haughty figure in the tattered gown a half-crazed being.

The story was at first but a vision about a common folk's leader, Piers Plowman; but this was enlarged

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a number of times and an appendix given, dealing with Do Well, Do Bet, and Do Best. At least three distinct versions, known to-day as A (1362), B (1367), and C (1398), were evolved. The three versions together compose one of the most voluminous, vivid, and detailed sociological studies in early literature, and evidently their truth and value were recognized in the author's own day, as more than forty manuscripts of the poem have been found.

The author sleeps and has a vision. The folk of this world, assembled in a field, are about to start on a journey in search of Truth and Supreme Good. A lady, Holy Church, points out in the distance the Tower of Truth and also the Castle of Care, where Wrong dwells. She explains to the leaderless army how man should live. Lady Meed is there, a beautiful lady representing reward or bribery, without which few deeds are undertaken. She is to be married to Fals (Falsehood), and the couple will dwell in the Earldom of Envy. Some of the company oppose such a union, however, and the wedding group go to Westminster to have the dispute settled. The king decides to marry her to a knight, Conscience; but the knight refuses, and reveals her evil ways. She gives high positions to knaves and fools; Conscience will have none of her. Lady Meed uses the usual defense of woman—tears—and then explains her usefulness, proving that the work of the world is done because of her. The knight explains that there are two Meeds—Reward and Bribery—and that the world has confused them. Then Meed is “wroth as the wynde.” Reason is sent for to judge the arguments. Now, however, another friction arises; Peace

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presents a petition against Wrong, who has robbed the poor and deceived women.

The scene shifts often and abruptly. Reason now appears before the whole nation in the field and makes a speech. The priest, Repentance, hears the confession of the Seven Deadly Sins, who, though supposed to be mere abstractions, are depicted with such vividness as to become living personages. These Sins may really be converted; but they must also seek Truth in order that their repentance may be perfect. Then appears Piers Plowman, a simple-hearted, uneducated peasant who shall show them and all the people the way to this Truth. Go through Meekness, he commands them, until they come to Conscience, cross the stream called Be-buxom-of-speech by the ford named Honour-your-fathers, pass by Swear-not-in-vain and Covet-not, and the stocks called Steal-not, and Slay-not, turn aside from the hill, Bear-no-false-witness, and then shall they see a court with walls of Wit and battlements of Christendom, containing houses roofed with Love-as-brethren. Grace and Amend-you keep the gate; they will admit the pilgrims on the plea of the seven sisters, Abstinence, Humility, Charity, Chastity, Patience, Peace, and Bounty.

Yet another vision—the dream of Do Well, Do Bet, and Do Best. This portion is composed mostly of strong, energetic sermons mingled with vivid pictures, such as Christ's struggles with the devil and the Harrowing of Hell. Then Langland is awakened on the Malvern Hills by the bells of Easter morning. The poem draws to a close with a thought of death. The poet would know how to spend most usefully the few

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days remaining to him. Nature replies, "Learne to love"; that is the sum and substance of all good.

No plot here; not even a plan; it is but a confused, impetuous, fierce outburst against the evils of the day. As has been said, the story leaps from scene to scene; few lead into those following. It makes no great difference, however. Sincerity goes a long way in art and literature, and this trait enables the bitter-hearted Langland to portray situations, scenes, and characters that are not easily forgotten. There are, in truth, flashes of genius—unconscious flashes; for the gaunt, half-starved poet had gotten beyond the point where he cared to shine; his whole desire was to show how totally the world was out of joint. His is indeed "a woful and terrible laugh, harbinger of the final catastrophe and doom." He is English and Anglo-Saxon to the core. He is bluntly honest and old-fashioned. He prefers the ancient alliteration to the new-fangled riming verse. He chooses the time-honored "vision" and allegory as the form for his preachment, and that preachment is far more important than any subtlety of plot or finish of diction. In his way he is a sociologist, just as Chaucer is; but while Chaucer smiles, Langland snarls. Both place before us the actual life and opinions of the times; but Langland gives in addition the common people's plea. Chaucer speaks *about* the lowly; Langland speaks *from among* them. It is a rugged story—rejecting rime, full of abnormal, noisy, ill-shapen words, purposely made jarring—vivid, stern, uncompromising, huge, and, above all, sincere and effective. It was the voice of the common folk—the fiction that portrayed their life, their sufferings, their ideals.

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I have said that Langland was truly English. He believed in England for the English. He believed in the Pope as long as the Pope kept his finger out of British affairs; he disliked foreigners and pompous churchmen. He was practically Protestant and almost Puritanical. Unlike Chaucer, who could smile at the follies of the day, he had a true Anglo-Saxon hatred for any form of deception. This necessarily prevented his giving the full, rounded view of life found in Chaucer's fiction; on the other hand, it sometimes enabled him to show, as the more prosperous poet never could, the suffering, tyranny, and pathos of the fourteenth century. His figures frequently remind us of the blind seeking the light, of the voice of the lost and bewildered calling for help; Chaucer's are creatures of the light, needing no help. After all, perhaps, if the sufferings and wretchedness of the lowly classes composing the vast majority of the population be considered, Langland gives us a truer picture of his day than does Chaucer.

Be that as it may, Langland, like his great contemporary, marks a distinct advance made in narrative by the introduction of character portrayal. Chaucer prefers to show us individuals; Langland prefers to picture masses. The one delights in the psychology of one soul, the other in the psychology of the crowd. There may be, of course, little comparison of the arts of the two men. Chaucer is one of the greater story-tellers of all literature. However, in this one point, character creation, comparison can justly be made. The one is bright and persistently optimistic, the other gloomy and stubbornly pessimistic. Chaucer describes the seemingly

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happy surface; Langland uncovers the smoldering depths. Chaucer smiles at the simplicity of the common people; Langland perceives the strength of the nation in them. Both, in the honest effort to show life as it really appeared to them, contributed to fiction a much-needed realism that has seldom been entirely absent in any succeeding day.

GOWER

For the other narrators of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a few pages of discussion should suffice. They were, for the most part, disciples, imitators, lacking in either the bravery or power to be highly original. John Gower, educated and cultured as he was, wrote of type heroes and type adventures in the old-fashioned, monotonous manner. Doubtless he was acquainted with the same books as Chaucer, and many more besides; but he lacked Chaucer's knowledge of men and life, and therefore seldom could retell with an equally convincing charm the stories he found in the manuscripts.

John Gower (1325-1408) was the aristocrat of early poets. Born of an ancient family, a large land-owner in Kent, a thorough believer in the divine rights of royalty, he could see little good in the common English stock, and even had his doubts as to the permanence of the English language. Naturally he found few stories among the lowly folk worth the telling. Langland he would have scorned; doubtless some of Chaucer's plebeian tales were disgusting to him. And yet he was a good man, very religious and benevolent; the last six or seven years of his life he spent in a priory medi-

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tating on spiritual matters. Birth, training, environment, circumstances, fortune in general, conspired to give him a narrow and prejudiced view of the world and its creatures.

For this reason, as well as for his lack of daring, Gower cannot be classed as one of the great storytellers of medieval literature. His *Speculum Meditantis*, written in French, is lost; his Latin *Vox Clamantis*, a didactic tirade against the peasants of England, might as well be lost as far as influence on a reading class is concerned; his English *Confessio Amantis*, written at the request of the king, is saved from utter neglect by means of a few good stories in it. In this work a lover makes his confession in a formal manner to Genius, the priest of Venus. This priest apparently dislikes new ideas, fads, and modern ways of loving, and tells the lover stories or "examples" to illustrate his views, and also as a consolation. The lover writes a letter to Venus, using tears for ink, and displays in his words and opinions his old-fashioned, knightly sentimentality. At the last, the lover, now old and wrinkled, has a vision of the world's famous lovers. The chief interest of the book lies, of course, in its hundred or more stories; but the exact and tedious verse and the monotonous, detailed manner of narrative ruin many of them. Now and then, however, the genius of the man gains the upper hand of his conventionality, and a well-told romance results.

His story of Florent, which some readers have considered even better than Chaucer's version, shows the "moral Gower" at his best. Florent, captured by an enemy, whose relative he has killed, is offered life and

freedom if he can find the answer to the question: What does every woman most desire? Going forth to seek the information, he meets an old hag who promises to tell him the secret on condition that he marry her. Having agreed, he learns that a woman desires above all else sovereignty over her husband. The answer is correct; the knight is relieved from punishment; he returns in disgust to marry the old woman. Immediately after the marriage, however, she becomes a beautiful lady; her beauty lasts, and she proves to be the daughter of the King of Sicily. Here we have indeed an ancient tale. The Sanskrit and the Gaelic contain it; Gawain had the same adventure; Mandeville finds it in his Eastern travels. Gower tells the story well mainly because it is a good story in itself; but he relates it in the manner of medieval days and not in that of the Renaissance. Chaucer may not have made the legend so dignified; but it seems more human, while the person telling it is, at least, a modern sinner, and not a doting, sighing lover of the Middle Ages.

Yet, the fact that Gower was popular among the educated and in his day stood in the same rank as Chaucer shows that the day was still medieval. Chaucer and possibly Langland were the only writers of fiction daring to reach out toward the future in realism and bold portrayal of the every-day man. The writers of the fifteenth century admired and imitated Chaucer and Gower; but they admired and imitated those phases which were least modern. Fiction had to wait for the full coming of the Renaissance in the sixteenth century to free itself from the conventionalities of chivalrous romance.

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LYDGATE

Story-writers of the day recognized that it was a decadent period and acknowledged themselves to be abject copyists. Lydgate called Chaucer his master, and Stephen Haws declared his intention to follow "all the perfitnes of my master Lydgate." Thus the disciples wrote voluminously but not with originality or freshness, and all built in "the shadow of Chaucer's palace."

Lydgate, the frankest of these imitators of Chaucer, was born about 1370, lived in Paris for some time, was a monk in the monastery of Bury St. Edmund, wrote as fast as he could, and at his death, about 1446, doubtless regretted that he had composed only two or three hundred thousand lines of poetry. Not once did he dare to think he could improve upon his master, and the more closely he could associate himself with Chaucer the more he felt honored. He even added his *Story of Thebes* (1422) to the *Canterbury Tales*. Having met the pilgrims returning from Canterbury, he tells this story of Greek war, wherein a Christian bishop blesses the warriors, and guns, cannons, and powder cause rather premature havoc. His *Temple of Glas* is similar to the *House of Fame*; his *Falls of Princes* is under obligations to the *Monk's Tale*. His perseverance is truly wonderful. His *Troy Book*, of 30,000 lines, has been well described by Jusserand as one "where pasteboard warriors hew each other to pieces without suffering much pain or causing us much sorrow."⁵ His verse is often abominable; meter is frequently beneath his notice.

⁵ *Literary History of the English People*, Vol. I, p. 500.

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And yet, this poet was popular for at least one hundred years after his death. Chaucer, Lydgate, Gower—these composed the literary trinity before 1500. Doubtless the churches aided in maintaining his fame; the Bishop of Ely declared that his works led to an increase of virtue. His *Assembly of the Gods*, for instance, is mainly a sermon on life and death, and is thinly veiled by a conventional story and vision. In his sleep he is carried by Morpheus to Pluto's kingdom. Æolus is accused of bringing ruin to the world; Apollo has the gods assemble for a banquet; but Diana will not feast until Æolus is judged; he is found innocent. Discord and Death enter, and "examples" are presented to show their power. Then Vice determines to attack Virtue. A procession of Virtue's followers—Humility, Patience, etc.—is pictured. Vice's host is much larger; but Virtue may depend on the strength of Purity. Conscience stands in the field as Judge. Sensuality sows weeds in which Virtue becomes entangled; Perseverance comes to the rescue; Vice is conquered; Predestination brings the palm to Virtue. Free Will blames the loss on Sensuality; Nature argues in defense of Sensuality. In the end Death is given a place in the world. Morpheus brings forward the conventional painted wall, and Doctrine explains the morals portrayed on it. It is very doubtful whether Lydgate's "master Chaucer" would have been wildly enthusiastic over this hodgepodge of Christian and pagan theology. Surely Providence was allowing the old forces in fiction to wear themselves out that the field might be prepared for a new and saner form of literature.

The old themes have been worn threadbare; the old

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methods have been used until any one can use them; enthusiasm and interest must be gained from some new source. Aid came from an unexpected direction. The very unromantic and unpoetic demands of trade brought forth a novel type of literature—the travel book. Books on commerce, trade statements, descriptions of other lands, were in demand. Real life had to be dealt with, and prose, instead of poetry, necessarily was given opportunity to picture scenes and relate adventures. Mandeville's *Travels* proved that modern life as well as the days of chivalry contained wonders worth the telling. True, modern research has proved that Mandeville never existed and that a French physician, Jean de Bourgogne, wrote the book and created the character of Mandeville just as Defoe did that of Robinson Crusoe; but the fact remains that here was a work having precious little to do with love-lorn knights and angelic ladies and a great deal to do with the supposed facts of modern life.

More and more from this time forth will fiction show this trait—an effort to put the *facts* of life before us. The stories may be romantic; they may portray an impossible pastoral or ideal existence; but some conception of reality and some respect for plausibility will be evidenced, while the various characters will show some peculiar individuality rather than the traits of a mere type. The period at least gave weariness of the old forms, showed the necessity for realism, cleared the stage for a new and more distinctive form of actors and action, and caused a more earnest attempt to fathom the motives and emotions of the soul.

CHAPTER V

THE FICTION OF THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

FOREIGN FICTION

JUSSERAND has said: "In one thing the French conquerors entirely failed; they never succeeded in acclimatizing during the Middle Ages those shorter prose stories which were so popular in their own country."¹ It remained for the Renaissance to bring French and Italian fiction into hearty admiration and imitation among the English. Curiosity was doubtless the most prominent and persistent trait of that wonderful period of intellectual awakening; the customs and thoughts of other lands were in demand; and the result was that a torrent of French, Spanish, and Italian literature flooded the British Isles. And accompanying such works of an informing nature came the fiction of these foreigners. Some of the old-fashioned Englishmen of the day were shocked at not only the amount but the contents. Ascham declared that these stories could be found in every shop in London, and complained that, bad as Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* was for public morals, these Continental tales were a hundred times more pernicious. Some translators themselves agreed with these

¹ *English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare*, p. 47.

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frowning critics; Harrington, for instance, in his edition of *Orlando Furioso*, felt called upon to write an apology and to give a list of the objectionable parts in his book, so that conscientious readers could pass by such outlandish sections.

Soon collections of such freely translated stories were appearing thick and fast. Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* (1566) contained blood-stirring selections from Boccaccio's works and other Italian narratives, and soon Shakespeare, seizing upon the book, was presenting the public with the same food under such titles as *Romeo and Juliet*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Measure for Measure*. Fenton's *Tragical Discourses* (1567), Riche's *Farewell to the Military Profession* (1584), one of the sources of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, and Grimeston's *Admirable and Memorable Histories* (1607)—these might be named as specimens of the foreign fiction that every dandy, yes, and every sober gentleman, in London fingered at the book-stall. Numerous short stories were given translation (so called) and sold separately, and very early the common folk outside of London, as well as in it, were buying from peddling chapmen tales that had been dreamed under the vine-clad hills of Italy. Thus the *Hystorie of Hamblet* (1618), originally from Bandello, but brought in through the French, was offered in cheap form; *The History of Lady Lucre* was translated at least eight times; and side by side with these on the book-shelf or in the chapman's bag might be found the abbreviated and mutilated *Guy of Warwick*, *Arthur of Little Britain*, *Robin Hood*, and many another legend that had come down from the old days. Truly the Renaissance

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had made England almost as fiction-mad as the America of the twentieth century.

These stories were not of the gentlest and sweetest nature; we soon discover that, unlike Bottom, they did not "roar like any sucking dove." There was in them a most dramatic display of feeling and passion. In *Lady Lucres*, for example, the heroine, a married woman, falls in love with Eurialus, and, willing to risk safety, reputation, peace with God, for the fulfilment of her desire, raves in her torment with all the violence of a "penny dreadful." Moralists of the day, such as Ascham, might rail loudly against such blood-curdling narratives; but this only further aroused the interest of the people and increased the sales.

FOLK TALES

Caxton's press had begun the popularizing of fiction, and the good, or bad, work went busily on. The list of his printings shows a large percentage of fiction; Gower's *Confessio*, Chaucer's *Tales*, Lydgate's stories, a prose version of *Reynard the Fox*, and in July, 1485, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. This masterly piece of fiction—for, with all its length, repetitions, and confusion, it is masterly—held public interest until near the beginning of the eighteenth century, and gave way then only because analysis of emotion instead of mere incident became the dominant theme in story-telling. The printing-press gave some books fame because they deserved it; but it also kept many alive, not because they were good, but because they were cheapened and satisfied the passionate hunger of a naturally intellectual people who had long been deprived of reading. As we have noted

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in the previous study, absurd tales of such ancients as Virgil and Hercules, now become magicians or romantic knights, still persisted, while stories of such national figures as Robin Hood, Thomas of Reading, and George-a-Green gained fresh life through the assistance of type. It was well, perhaps, that these narratives of the good old English manner survived, with their rude but sane simplicity, else the nation under the influence of the foreign fiction of passion and intrigue might have lost a decent standard of morality. Oftentimes these homely stories were in still more homely language, and to this day we find some of that charm which caused them to sell readily when hawked up and down the streets of old London. Notice this picture of a feast among the common folk, as shown in *Thomas of Reading*:

“Sutton’s wife of Salisbury, which had lately been delivered of a son, against her going to church, prepared great cheer; at what time Simon’s wife of Southampton came thither, and so did divers others of the clothiers’ wives, only to make merry at this churching feast; and whilst these dames sat at the table, Crab, Weasel, and Wren waited on the board, and as the old Proverb speaketh, ‘Many women, many words,’ so fell it out at that time; for there was such prattling that it passed: some talked of their husbands’ frowardness, some showed their maids’ sluttishness, othersome deciphered the costliness of their garments, some told many tales of their neighbors: and, to be brief, there was none of them but would have talked for a whole day.

“But when Crab, Weasel, and Wren saw this they concluded betwixt themselves that as oft as any of the

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women had a good bit of meat on their trenchers they, offering a clean one, should catch that commodity, and so they did: but the women, being busy in talk, marked it not till at the last one found leisure to miss her meat."

MORE

Far above this gusty current of popular folk-lore glided a calmer but ever-increasing current of contemplative literature. And one of the spirits of this upper air was Sir Thomas More (1485-1535). That was a lovable man—a curious, contradictory sort of being, one who for the good of his soul wore an "inner sharp shirt of hair," subjected himself almost daily to severe penance, hated Protestants, as a class, with all his heart, and loved many of them, as individuals, with the same zeal, and yet a man who with all cheerfulness served his kingdom with such ability as to become the successor of the mighty Wolsey as Lord Chancellor. His was a prophetic spirit, seeing at least a millennium beyond his day. Educated under the watchful eye of a suspicious father, who removed him from Oxford lest the Greek ruin his Catholicism, he gained breadth in spite of his environment, and wrote in the *Utopia* that which three centuries have declared surpassingly worthy and wise but have not yet wholly attained.

The *Utopia* (the name is from two Greek words meaning *No Land*) was published in Latin in 1516, and did not appear in English until translated by Ralph Robinson in 1551. For two reasons, it would seem, the author wrote in the ancient tongue: first, because he may have had serious doubts as to the future of English as a literary medium, and, second, that the book might not

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reach the lower classes and inflame their unreasoning passions by its socialism.

He need not have feared; it requires a thinking being to appreciate the full meaning and scope of this strange dream; doubtless the crowd would have laughed at it and turned back to the old ways. The second part of the book (the part written first, however) is by far the more pleasant; it contains the vision of that republican government where the ruler is elected by the vote of an intelligent populace; where all are compelled to receive education; where there are few laws and absolutely no lawyers; where war is unknown because "a thing very beastly"; and where even hunting is abhorred because the pursuit and slaughter of an "innocent hare" is beneath the dignity of a grown man. "By all means possible thei procure to have golde and silver among them in reproche and infamie," and, since all draw their food and clothing from the public storehouse, the mad scramble for wealth is unheard of. There are no priests in the land, for the worship is most simple, and each man is allowed all freedom of conscience; "thei consider it a point of arrogant presumption to compell all others by violence and threatenings to agre to the same that thou believest to be trew."

But, turning to the first book, what a picture of the real world we have! Here is Defoe long before his day. London in all her desolate wickedness is shown with a realism scarcely surpassed by this later master. The cruel punishments for minor crimes, the peasants struggling under the loss of their farms now turned into pastures, the tyranny of the disbanded armies, the hypocrisy of the priests, the foul scheming of the govern-

ment, the lust for place and fame, the burden of war and display—all these stand out with the gloomy boldness of a Rembrandt.

Above all else, for our purpose at least, is the fact that the story sounds *natural*. The narrative opens with a disavowal of any intention to startle the reader with heroic deeds or monstrous beings. An old mariner is asked to tell of his travels, and he agrees to do so. "But as for monsters by cause they be no newes, of them we were nothyng inquisitive. For nothyng is more easye to bee founde then bee barkynge Scyllæs, ravenyng Celenes, and Lestrigones devourers of people, and such lyke great and incredible monsters. But to find citisens ruled by good and holesome lawes, that is an exceding rare and harde thyng." Forthwith the ancient mariner begins to talk like a human being, and his characters talk and act likewise. The descriptions are not exaggerations, but vivid and realistic; the humor is fresh; the story with all its details moves rapidly, accurately, and surely. A splendid book of splendid dreams is this—dreams "destined to be realized long after More's headless body had crumbled to dust, by that learning which he himself so sedulously cultivated, and by the decay, too, of some of those ideas for which he died a martyr's death."²

This, then, is not the least among those visions of the Ideal State, beginning with Plato's *Republic* and appearing again and again in more modern times in such works as Barclay's *Argenis*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, the story of Gargantua and Pantagruel, Bergerac's *States and Empires*, Godwin's *Man in the Moon*, the Duchess

² Tuckerman: *History of English Prose Fiction*, p. 68.

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of Newcastle's *Blazing World*, Harington's *Oceana*, Fénelon's *Telemaque*, Berington's *Memoirs of Gaudenzio*, Montaigne's *Essays*, Voltaire's *Tales*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and Bellamy's *Looking Backward*.

LYLY

It is a pity that the successors of More found so little worthy of imitation in his naturalness and simplicity. But now came on an age of fads and fancies, of vain display and extravagant ornamentation. Men spent fortunes on dress, and the Common Council of London felt compelled in 1582 to pass laws preventing common apprentices from wearing silk on their hats, a ruff or a collar more than a yard and a half long, and doublets adorned with silver and gold. The queen herself could not bear to be outdressed, while ladies of the day tortured themselves with vast accumulations of stiffened apparel, wire hair-cages, staves, etc. Prosperity had brought artificiality in dress, in manners, and, alas, in literature. Said John Lyly, the father of English Euphuism: "It is a world to see how Englishmen desire to hear finer speech than the language will allow"; and he then proceeded to distort the English speech into a "fineness" never before dreamed of.

Euphues, the anatomy of wyt . . . wherein are contained the delights that wyt followeth in his youth by the pleasauntnesse of Love, and the happynesse he reapeth in age by the perfectnesse of wisdom—this is but a portion of the title of that book which for ten or fifteen years swept English prose off its feet, turned the heads of Elizabethan courtiers, and threatened to turn the English language into a hopeless mass of intricate

phraseology and monotonously balanced epigrams. It was the result of a highly artificial civilization; it was intended for the victims of *ennui* produced by such a civilization; and especially was its appeal to the women idlers of the period. "Euphues had rather lye shut in a Ladyes casket then open in a Schollers studie." "It resteth, Ladies, that you take the paines to read it, but at such times as you spend in playing with your little Dogges, and yet will I not pinch you of that pastime, for I am content that your Dogges lye in your laps, so Euphues may be in your hands, that when you shall be wearie of the one you may be ready to sport with the other." The author had his desire; for every lady of the day talked Euphuism; the queen herself smiled upon it; and playwrights and story-tellers imitated it with extreme zeal.

Who was this innovator, John Lyly? Little enough is known of his life. Born in Kent in 1554, he received his Master of Arts at Magdalen College, Oxford, but, according to Wood's *History of Oxford* (1674), was never a good student there, being "always adverse to the crabbed studies of logic and philosophy." Yet at the University and at Elizabeth's court he was esteemed "a noted wit" and "a rare poet, witty, comical, and facetious." Writing he always was; probably he thought that his pen might gain him favor with the queen. If so, his hopes were vain; for many years of waiting brought only "a thousand hopes, but all nothing, a hundred promises, but yet nothing"; and when he lay down to die in 1606, he declared he left but "patience to my creditors, melancholie without measure to my friends, and beggarie without shame to my family."

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This maker of embroidered English by no means invented the embroidery. The form was an importation from Spain, where Guevara, whose works had already been translated into English, had made the style popular, and Lyly came at the right moment in the development of British intellectual life to supply with his labored use of similes and antitheses the national longing for the novel and fantastic. The plot is but a feeble effort. Euphues and Philautus, two young men of Naples, are the closest of friends. Philautus is in love with a lady, Lucilla; but, Euphues having been presented, the latter argues with such clever wit about such abstruse questions as whether intellect or handsomeness in a man causes woman to love, that the lady promptly falls in love with him, and naturally a misunderstanding arises between the two gentlemen from Naples. Now letters of the most stilted and elaborate nature are exchanged. "Dost thou not know," writes Philautus, "a perfect friend should be lyke the Glaze-worme, which shineth most bright in the darke? or lyke the pure Frankincense which smelleth most sweet when it is in the fire? or at the leaste not unlyke to the damaske Rose which is sweeter in the still then on the stalke? But thou, Euphues, dost rather resemble the Swallow, which in the summer creepeth under the eves of eny house, and in the winter leaveth nothing but durt behind hir; or the humble Bee, which having sucked hunny out of the fayre flower, doth leave it and loath it; or the Spider which in the finest web doth hang the fayrest Fly."

After a time, however, Lucilla jilts Euphues also, and the two lovers in each other's arms bemoan in care-

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fully balanced phrases the folly of women in general and of this one in particular.

This first book appeared in 1579. In 1580 in the second part, *Euphues and His England*, the two friends visit Great Britain, where Philautus, to the disgust of his friend, marries, and Euphues, after much praise of English affairs in general, goes to the "bottom of the Mountain Silexedra" to spend his remaining years in meditating in thoughts carefully split in halves. This is indeed fit and proper; for how grave and serious these two young men are! How deeply, earnestly, and confidently they talk of religion, love, marriage, child-rearing, what not! Always very liberal in their opinions, they are yet just as positive. The two books are filled with deep dissertations on many subjects, and from far and near the talkers bring their similes and metaphors to enforce their meanings.

"The foule Toade hath a fayre stone in his head, the fine gold is found in the filthy earth, the sweet kernell lyeth in the hard shell: vertue is harboured in the heart of him that most men esteeme misshappen. Contrariwise, if we respect more the outward shape, then the inward habit, good God, into how many mischiefes do we fall? into what blindnesse are we ledde? Doe we not commonly see that in painted pottes is hidden the deadliest poyson? that in the greenest grasse is the greatest serpent? in the cleerest water the ugliest Toade? . . .

"'In the coldest flint,'" says Lucilla, "there is hot fire; the Bee that hath hunny in hir mouth hath a sting in hir tayle; the tree that beareth the sweetest fruite hath a sower sap; yea, the wordes of men, though

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they seeme smooth as oyle, yet their heartes are as crooked as the stalke of Ivie.' ”

Lyly doubtless knew he was pricking the popular curiosity of the day by bringing in such dangerous animals and plants. Topsell's *History of Four-Footed Beasts* and *History of Serpents*, two widely read books of the period, appealed to their readers by means of the same strange information. The Lamia, for instance, as described by Topsell, has fore legs like a bear's, hind legs like a goat's, breasts like a woman's, and a body scaled like a dragon's, and when it sees a man entices him by the beauty of its bosom, and then devours him. Travelers in America, India, and other far-away lands were constantly bringing back stories of such monsters, and Lyly showed shrewdness in using these monstrosities in his strained comparisons.

In spite of his imitation of a foreign movement, and in spite of his fantastic manner, Lyly is, after all, true to his English training. Morality must conquer. Man must not be overcome by woman. The two lovers are, of course, especially long-winded when discoursing on love. When feeling love-throes approaching, go to study instead of to the lady. “Try law or physicke or divinitie, or meditate sarcastically about woman. Take from them their perywigges, their paintings, their jewels, their rowles, their boulstrings, and thou shalt soone perceive that a woman is the least part of hir selfe. When they be once robbed of their robes, then will they appear so odious, so ugly, so monstrous, that thou wilt rather think them serpents then saints, and so like hags, that thou wilt feare rather to be enchaunted then enamoured. Looke in their closettes, and there shalt thou finde an

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appticaryes shop of sweete confections, a surgions boxe of sundry salves, a pedlers packe of newe fangles. Besides all this their shadows, their spots, their lawnes, their leefekyes, their ruffles, their rings, shew them rather cardinall curtisians then modest matrons."

In short, *Euphues* is a series of sermons with some signs of the novel throughout it. There is really some earnest pleading for a change in the dangerous customs of the day. Discussing the question of nursing children, the author says: "It is most necessary and most naturall, in mine opinion, that the mother of the childe be also the nurse, both for the entire love she beareth to the babe, and the great desire she hath to have it well nourished: for is there any one more meete to bring up the infant than she that bore it? . . . Is the earth called the mother of all things only because it bringeth forth. No, but because it nourisheth those things that springe out of it. Whatsoever is bred in the sea is fed in the sea; . . . the lyonnesse nurseth hir whelps, the raven cherisheth hir byrdes, the viper hir broode, and shal a woman cast away hir babe? "

In spite of its moralizing, its sermons, its petty tricks of language, its straining similes and its nice distinctions, we have in this book an approach toward the novel of manners. No marvels are set before us; the characters have the thoughts and the mode of thinking of sixteenth or seventeenth century beings; there is a real attempt to analyze sentiments; this paper garden has some natural flowers in it. True, the two young men from Naples often act like two sticks; true, *Euphues* is the ancestor of Richardson's monster of gentility, Sir Charles Grandison and all the other ab-

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normally moral characters of the eighteenth-century fiction; but we feel that here is a distinct effort to portray life as it is or might be, and such an effort means much progress in the evolution of fiction. But of more value than all this, perhaps, is the fact that here at length is an attempt at valuation of words, an effort to fathom the possibilities of language, an endeavor to gain precision and suggestiveness. From this passing fad English literature must have issued with a new understanding of its power and limitations and with recognition that mere plot cannot make masterly fiction.

LYLY'S IMITATORS

Of course, a host of imitators and scoffers soon trod upon the heels of Lyly. Shakespeare ridiculed his language in *Love's Labor's Lost*; Falstaff makes use of it in the first part of *Henry IV*; Ben Jonson in *Every Man out of His Humor* imitated the style; even as modern an author as Sir Walter Scott presents Euphuism in one production, *The Monastery*. In their efforts to increase sales, writers of the late sixteenth century thrust the word "Euphuës" into their titles. Thus Munday issued in 1580 *Zelauto . . . containing a delicate disputation . . . given for a friendly entertainment to Euphuës at his late arrival into England*; Robert Greene in 1587 issued *Euphuës, his censure to Philautus wherein is presented a philosophical combat between Hector and Achilles*; in 1589 came Greene's *Menaphon, Camillas Alarum to Slumbering Euphuës*; Lodge's *Rosalynde, Euphuës Golden Legacie found after his death in his cell at Silixedra*, came in 1590;

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and in 1594 Dickenson's *Arisbas, Euphues amidst his Slumbers*, added another to the imitations. Some of these were as devoid of genius as they were full of extravagance; all smacked of plagiarism. Zelauto, to take an example, was a son of the Duke of Venice, who, having heard from English merchants descriptions of their native land, visits the island and is as delighted as ever Euphues was.

A score or more of books imitated the plot and style, without granting Lyly so much credit as the insertion of the word "Euphues." Barnaby Riche's *Don Simonides* (1581) tells of a nobleman who visits Great Britain, sees the best society, and is delighted; this, as well as *The Second Tome of Travailes of Don Simonides* (1584), used by Shakespeare in *Twelfth Night*, was highly popular. Warner's *Pan, his Syrinx* (1584) is but another copy of Euphues, wherein Sorares is cast upon a desert island, his sons seek him, all meet with many adventures, and all hear stories and argue, with untiring enthusiasm and Euphuism, on such moral and philosophical topics as the artificiality of woman and the vanity of love. Melbancke's *Philotimus*, 1585, is another specimen of a feeble Euphuistic plot tottering under its burden of ethical disquisitions.

GREENE

Little would be gained by an extended list of these minor plagiarisms on Lyly; they show simply the bold knavery of mediocrity. A few men who followed the footsteps of Euphues were writers of ability if not of genius, and one of these was Robert Greene (1560-1592). He was one of those wild, uncontrollable, and

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unfortunate spirits who flashed too quickly through the days of Shakespeare. His life was a series of debauches and remorse. Working rapidly, carelessly, and by fits, "he made no account," declares his friend Nash, "of winning credit by his works," but simply to put "a spel in his purse to conjure up a good cuppe of wine with it at all times." Born at Norwich of a good and wealthy family, he was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge, where the native wild spirit soon asserted itself. "Being at the University of Cambridge, I light amongst wags as lewd as my selfe, with whome I consumed the flower of my youth, who drew me to travell into Italy and Spaine, in which places I saw and practizde such villainie as is abominable to declare." By 1580 he had written a novel, *Mamillia*, in the Italian style, but did not publish it until 1583, the year he received his M.A. Soon he had out-Lylyed Lyly. Before 1590 he had published fifteen "love-pamphlets," and in every one he had equaled or excelled the Euphuist's chief traits: "his languid elegance, his excessive prettiness, and his abnormal botany and zoölogy."³

Even after the success of several novels, Greene returned to college, this time to Oxford in 1588; but most of the remainder of his life was spent in London. Here "in a night and a day would he have yarkt up a pamphlet" that other men could not have produced in months, and the result was such works as *The Mirror of Modesty*, dealing with the chastity of woman; *Arbasto*, telling of a Danish king's loves and battles; *Morando*, containing detailed lectures on love; *Pandosto*, describing ideal or impossible shepherds and thereby gaining

³ Pattee: *Foundations of English Literature*, p. 274.

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great success; and *Menaphon*, a beautiful pastoral tale and a work of real merit. Well might he boast in his *Repentance* of his ability as "a penner of love-pamphlets"; for his fame was wider than Shakespeare's.

Fame could not, however, supply his purse as fast as his good fellowship could empty it, and at length, having met an actor gorgeously dressed who depicted to him the glories and profits of the stage, he himself became an actor and made large sums. These, too, disappeared as soon as gained. In 1586 he married a good woman and tried to lead a moral life; but his wild soul could not be tamed, and shortly after the birth of a son he left his wife and never saw her again. And yet he must have been a man of affection, worthy of loving and being loved. He declared several times that people came all day long to talk with him. But the daredevil in him had too long reigned. "Hell, . . . what talke you of hell to me? I know if I once come there I shall have the company of better men than my selfe; I shall also meete with some madde knaves in that place, and so long as I shall not sit there alone, my care is the lesse." At length he sank so low that he had for a mistress a sister of a thief called Cutting Ball, who was hanged for his rascality. A genius, however, finds cause for expression in every environment; soon he was exposing the tricks of these scamps in a series of pamphlets as realistic as could be desired. All this, be it remembered, before the age of thirty-two; in that year he was a worn-out man. Picked up in a drunken stupor and carried into a shoemaker's house, he there in his dying hours wrote his *Repentance* and *Groat's Worth of Wit*, frank and rather humble confessions for so proud

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a being, but dealing rather bitter blows to Shakespeare and other "plagiarists."

Greene is even more inventive in style than Lyly. There is an enormous use of similes, metaphors, and far-fetched comparisons. Page after page is crowded with the supposed similarities between Nature and man (or, rather, women). "The agate, be it never so white without, yet it is full of black strokes within." "The greener the alisander leaves be, the more bitter is the sap." Euphues himself would have been surprised at the utter impossibility of the geography, history, botany, and zoölogy. A thousand years are as but a day when it is past. Early Greeks talk of Mahomet; Bohemians go to the oracle of Apollo; ships sail out of Bohemia; and sons go away for thirty years and return to fall in love with their still beautiful mothers. In morality Greene completely out-preached Lyly; every "love-pamphlet" states clearly its ethical purpose. In *Mamillia* we are told to beware of "the shadows of lewde luste"; in the *Mirror of Modesty* we see how God "plagueth the bloudthirstie hypocrites with deserved punishments"; *Pandosto* informs us that truth will out in time. And always, pray remember, England comes in for its full share of glory; other women are hypocrites, painted, lustful creatures, but English ladies are prayerful, saintly, angelic.

What are the plots unfolded in these stories so scornful of fact? In *Arbasto* an old man found in the Island of Candia, being prevailed upon to tell his tale, states that he is Arbasto, once King of Denmark, and once so powerful that he thought to conquer France. During a three-months' truce in his siege of Orleans, he falls in

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love with the French king's daughter, Doralicia, who scorns him; while her sister, Myrania, becomes possessed of a wild passion for him. As Jusserand says, "Arbasto continues loving and Doralicia perseveres in her coldness; they meet once and argue one against the other with the help of salamanders and scorpions, and empty their whole herbaria over each other's head; but things remain *in statu*." At length Arbasto by trickery is thrown into prison; his army is defeated; he is condemned to be executed within ten days. This is Myrania's opportunity. She entices the jailer to her room and causes him to fall into a pit, where he dies. Arbasto promises to marry her, and they escape to Denmark. He still loves Doralicia, however; but her anger is so great that she sends dreadfully Euphuistic answers to all his entreaties. Then, alas, Myrania finds the letters; she dies of a broken heart; and her father dies of sorrow over her death. Doralicia now becomes queen, discovers that she really loves Arbasto; but now he in his turn, sends her scornful answers. She dies of a broken heart. Then Arbasto's closest friend seizes the Danish throne, and the king retires to Candia, where, like the Ancient Mariner, he seems shaken with a frequent agony to tell his story. All of which is very sad indeed—that is, so many deaths in the family.

Pandosto, known to-day as a source of Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*, is still more impossible. Pandosto is King of Bohemia, and, as Bohemia is not well known, all sorts of tricks may occur there. The incidents and the Euphuistic heart-throbs seem to be the main purpose of such a story; there is little or no logical development of emotion; the characters simply decide to do a thing,

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and do it. *Menaphon, Camillas Alarum to Slumbering Euphues in his Melancholy Cell at Silexedra* is perhaps the best known, to-day, of Greene's fantastic plots, and is indeed one of the best fictions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Even though exaggerated and utterly impossible, it is, because of its pastoral scenes, soliloquies, songs, and bits of verse, a very pretty piece of work. Princess Sephestia and her son, having been banished by Damocles, King of Arcadia, come to the land belonging to the shepherd, Menaphon, where her husband, Maximus, has already come and assumed the name Melicertus. Sephestia now takes to herself the name Samela, and at once becomes the object of several violent courtships. Her husband, not recognizing her, makes love, is in a great passion about her, and expresses his turbulent heart in such language as—

“Mistress of all eyes that glance but at the excellence of your perfection, sovereign of all such as Venus hath allowed for lovers, *Ænone's* over-match, Arcadia's comet, Beauty's second comfort, all hail! Seeing you sit like Juno when she first watched her white heifer on the Lincen downs, as bright as silver Phœbe mounted on the high top of the ruddy element, I was, by a strange attractive force, drawn, as the adamant draws the iron, or the jet the straw, to visit your sweet self in the shade, and afford you such company as a poor swain may yield without offense; which, if you shall vouch to deign of, I shall be as glad of such accepted service as Paris was first of his best beloved paramour.”

Menaphon is no less Euphuistic in his adoration. The lady favors, however, her former husband, and doubtless he would have married her again had not her son,

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Pleusidippus, who had been stolen by pirates and reared by the King of Thessaly, come back and fallen in love with her. To complicate matters, her father hears of this Samela's beauty and also arrives to sue for her affection. In his violence, the king is about to execute Maximus and Pleusidippus, as the shortest way to rid himself of rivals, when the Delphian oracles reveal the secret, and all are happy, except Menaphon, who becomes reconciled, however, to his former love, Pesana. Time and the ravages of age count for nothing; the public cared only for the love and the deeds and the Euphuism.

Philomela is perhaps better because less prolix and because of the real personality of at least one of the characters. Phillippo Medici extremely jealous of his beautiful wife, Philomela, and believing that "women are most heart-hollow when they are most lip-holy," persuades his friend, Lutesio, to test her virtue. Hair-splitting, Euphuistic, and botanical and biological arguments now occur between this friend and the wife; but her purity remains unstained. Phillippo now hires two slaves to swear that his wife is unfaithful, and she is banished to Palermo. The Duke of Milan exposes all this; the husband, seeking her, rashly accuses himself of a murder in Palermo, and is being tried, when his wife, to shield him, declares herself the criminal. Of course, both are proved innocent. Then Phillippo very foolishly dies of ecstasy and Philomela lives a virtuous widow all the remainder of her life. Despite the ridiculous plot, it brings forward a forceful character in the person of Philomela. Phillippo is exagger-

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ated in his jealousy; but the wife is effective in her firmness, restraint, endurance, and undying affection.

These, then, are the fanciful sketches that Shakespeare readers pored over. And yet the man who could write these impossible dreams could portray thieves and rascals with a realism that shows him clearly the forerunner of Defoe. In his *Blacke Bookes Messenger, Laying Open the Life and Death of Ned Browne, One of the Most Notable of Cutpurses* (1590), he shows his genius for unsparing details, while in his *Quaint Dispute between Velvet Breeches and Clothe Breeches* (1592) we find the same blunt, keen-eyed realism. The latter book is a dispute between the old England and its homely honesty and the new England with its foreign airs and antics. See how the barber "comes out with his fustian eloquence and, making a low congé, saith:

" 'Sir, will you have your worships haire cut after the Italian manner, shorte and round, and then frounst with the curling yrons, to make it look like a halfe moone in a miste? or like a Spanyard, long at the eares and curled like the two endes of an old cast periwig? or will you be Frenchified, with a love locke downe to your shoulders, wherein you may weare your mistresse favour? The English cut is base, and gentlemen scorne it, novelty is daintye; speake the woord, sir, and my sissars are ready to execute your worships will.' "

We may not, for the present, linger longer with the witty, comical, and facetious Greene. Suffice to say that he proved the financial possibilities of novel-writing; for, according to Nash, publishers considered

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themselves "blest to pay Greene dear for the very dregs of his wit."

FORD

Such success meant, of course, another host of imitators. Of these Emmanuel Ford was one of the most important. Using less Euphuism, he displayed more improbability and far more immorality, and thus managed to secure a wide reading for nearly one hundred years. His first novel, *Parismus, the Renowned Prince of Bohemia* (1598), may be presented as a sample of them all. Here are very much the usual romantic adventures in the usual impossible land. Parismus meets Laurana at a masque, and after much flowery conversation the couple exchange vows of love. Hear a few of her affectionate words: "My lord, I assure you, that at such time as I sawe you comming first into this court, my heart was then surprised, procured as I think by the destinies, that ever since I have vowed to rest yours." The two then meet at night in a garden, *a la* Romeo and Juliet, except that Parismus comes in his nightgown. He climbs the wall—which must have been rather difficult in his flowing garment—and the lovers embrace until morning "to the unspeakable joy and comfort of them both." Now comes, however, a rival, Sicanus. Parismus turns outlaw, wages war against Sicanus, and at length marries Laurana in the Temple of Diana.

BRETON

Another imitator of Greene was Nicholas Breton (1542–1626), who, almost dropping Euphuism, used more immorality in its stead, and whose *Miseries of*

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Mavillia, with its pictures of low life, is another prophecy of the coming of a Defoe. A more romantic effort is his *Strange Fortunes of Two Excellent Princes* (1600), in which a son and a daughter famous for their beauty and intellect are married to two other youngsters famous for the same qualities. That is all. What else is there, after all, in many a novel? Such a book, with all its simplicity and prolixity, served to present even at that early date the germ of the society novel. Then, too, in 1603 Breton wrote a volume of imaginary letters, *A Poste with a Packet of Mad Letters*, and here again are shown the possibilities of that style of fiction later to make Richardson's *Pamela* so far-famed. Perhaps of still more significance in the progress of fiction was his *The Good and the Bad* (1616), containing little pictures of such characters as a knave, a virgin, a parasite, etc.

CHARACTER SKETCHES

Such collections may have lacked the element of plot, but they were studies in personality, and they could not but impress readers with the need and the possibilities of character portrayal in impressive story-telling. And such collections were numerous in the early seventeenth century. Hall's *Characters of Virtues and Vices* appeared in 1608; Overbury's *Characters* came in 1614; Earle's *Microcosmographie* startled by its monstrous title in 1638. Surely all the elements of the true novel were rapidly gathering for a master hand: the love theme, the pictures of different stages of society, the study of character and personality, the use of discourse or conversation, the presentation of

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scenic background, even some analysis of emotion. But the time was not yet ripe for that master hand. Not until courtiers had spun their airy nothings; not until the prisoner of Bedford jail had told of the struggles of the human soul; not until the London bricklayer, soldier and journalist, Defoe, had shown humanity without delusions, would the English world be ready for the plausible story of a plausible being.

LODGE

Rosalynde. Euphues' Golden Legacie: Found after His Death in His Cell at Silixedra, Bequeathed to Philautus' Sonnes Nursed Up with Their Father in England. Fetched from the Canaries by T. L. Gent. "T. L." is, of course, no other than Thomas Lodge, and the story no other than the one so beautifully presented in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. A curious and versatile fellow, this man Lodge. Born in London, the son of a rich merchant afterwards Lord Mayor, he was educated at Oxford, practised law, became a corsair, traveled far, and while at sea wrote romances, such as *The Margarite of America* and the famous *Rosalynde*. He engaged in privateering expeditions in the South Sea, wrote dramas and poems that were the admiration of London, and in his later years settled down as a physician in that city, and died of the plague in 1625.

Here we have a charming pastoral tale, elevated in tone, dramatic at times, beautiful in many scenes. Euphuism is still present, but not to a degree that mars. Reading the preface, one might judge that a bloody tragedy is about to be enacted. Lodge wants the world to understand that he is before all else, a soldier.

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“Roome for a souldier and a sailer that gives you the fruits of his labours that he wrote in the ocean!” But soon the tone becomes less warlike, and we find ourselves listening to the same story that old Chaucer intended to use and did leave in a rough draft known as the *Cook's Tale*, the same story that Shakespeare deemed worthy of imbuing with such mystic charm in his woodland comedy.

We are again led into an imaginary and impossible kingdom where reigns the tyrant, Torismund, who has driven the rightful monarch to Arden Forest for refuge. The latter's daughter, Rosalind, is kept captive for some time; but suddenly Torismund banishes her, and she, dressed as a page, wanders away to Arden with Alinda, the usurper's daughter, who has determined not to be separated from her. The couple, approaching Arden Forest, find shepherds who pipe sweetly and discourse in Latin about various abstruse questions. It is beautifully improbable. “For a shepherds life, oh! mistruse,” exclaims one, “did you but live a while in their content, you would saye the court were rather a place of sorrowe than of solace. . . . Care cannot harbour in our cottages, nor doo our homely couches know broken slumbers.”

Now the love-story begins. A shepherdess, Phœbe, is loved by disconsolate Montanus; but she falls in love with Rosalind, who, be it remembered, is acting the part of a boy. This, of course, gives Rosalind opportunity for advice couched in most flowing language. “Because thou art beautiful, be not so coye: as there is nothing more faire so there is nothing more fading, as momentary as the shadows which grow from a cloudie

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sunne. Such, my faire shepheardesse, as disdaine in youth desire in age, and then are they hated in the winter that might have been loved in the prime. A wrinkled maid is like a parched rose that is cast up in coffers to please the smell, not worn in the hand to content the eye." After many heart-throbs and descriptions of picturesque woodlands and piping shepherds, matters begin to approach the inevitable happy ending. Rosalind is recognized by her father; Phœbe, finding her heart's desire to be a woman, goes back to her rejoicing Montanus; the usurping king is driven from the throne; Arden Forest is full of happiness. Throughout the book there is but little character growth or analysis of emotion. Indeed, the characters are all too "nice" at the beginning to be any better at the end. Wherein lies its charm, then? With its freshness and its freedom of forest life, it is a story of dreamland, a portrayal of what men would like to see, a vision of man and nature in harmony and love.

SIDNEY

Few indeed are the men in harmony with Nature. There lived in Elizabethan days a soul that seemed to be in harmony not only with Nature, but with all things. The most beloved man of that era was Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586). "Gentle Sir Philip Sidney," cries Nash in his *Pierce Penniless*, "thou knewest what belonged to a scholar; thou knewest what pains, what toil, what travel conduct to perfection; well could'st thou give every virtue his encouragement, every art his due, every writer his desert, cause none more virtuous, witty, or learned than thyself. But thou art dead in thy

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grave, and hast left too few successors of thy glory, too few to cherish the sons of the Muses, or water those budding hopes with their plenty, which thy bounty erst planted." Men had it engraved upon their tombs that they had been friends of Sidney; the eulogies and poems on his death filled volumes; and when that death occurred in his thirty-second year England mourned for months.

Born in Penshurst Castle, Kent, the son of the Viceroy of Ireland and a relative of the Earl of Warwick and the Earl of Leicester, he was educated at Oxford, was in France in 1572 as a courtier of Charles IX, traveled widely through Southern Europe, and returned in 1575 to Elizabeth's court, one of the most versatile, witty, and useful men in all the kingdom. William of Orange declared him "one of the ripest and greatest counsellors of State that lived in Europe"; he was the joy of Elizabeth's islands. It was while with Elizabeth at Chartley that he first saw the beautiful twelve-year-old girl, Penelope Devereux, daughter of the Earl of Essex, and then and there began the tragedy of his life. They loved and doubtless would have married had he not delayed the occasion until her father compelled her to marry Lord Rich in 1581. Then their love was wilder than ever. It was under such a strain of emotion that the noble sonnets of Astrophel and Stella were written, and it was because of this very strain that Sidney plunged more earnestly into the activities of the day and soon became one of the most widely known men of the sixteenth century. And what became of Penelope? She had seven children by Lord Rich, then became the mistress of Lord Mountjoy,

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and had five more children, and in spite of her loose life received many dedications as the lady of the sonnets.

Unluckily for himself, but fortunately for literature, Sidney opposed any effort to marry Elizabeth to a Frenchman, and, having incurred the wrath of the powerful, he retired for a time to his sister's home at Wilton. There in 1580 he wrote the *Arcadia*, "a trifle and that triflingly handled," so he himself wrote to this sister, the Countess of Pembroke. Restored to popularity at court, he became a member of Parliament in 1581 and 1584, in 1583 married the daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham, governor of Flushing in the Netherlands, and died in 1586 of a wound received at the Battle of Zutphen.

The *Arcadia*, written in 1580, was not published until after his death. Much of the work was done in the presence of his sister; the remainder was sent to her, sheet by sheet, as written. Sidney commanded her to destroy it as soon as read, for he considered it almost unworthy of his pen. And yet its beauty of language and scene, its daintiness of love, its emotions, its high chivalry, were destined to make Arcadianism victor over Euphuism, and to cause the name of Sidney to be synonymous to this day with Arcadian loveliness.

Doubtless the chief trait of Sidney's is beauty. He found it in Nature, in literature, in man, in woman, and in life in general. He could extract it where other men found only the commonplace. The sonnets of Astrophel and Stella are imbued with it; his *Apology for Poetry* contains the same sweetness and light; the *Arcadia* is filled with it. It is beautiful thought in beau-

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tiful language about beautiful things. It is the poet's mind endeavoring to express itself with the freedom of prose. "It is not riming and versing," he declares, "that maketh a poet, no more than a long gowne maketh an advocate; who though he pleaded in armor should be an advocate and no soldiour." He found a joy in high and in low. We all remember his sentiment about the folk-ballads so scorned by the aristocracy of his day. "I never heard the olde song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart mooved more than with a trumpet: and yet it is sung by some blind crouder with no rougher voyce than rude stile." If there were no other prominent qualities, this joyful sense of beauty would keep alive the *Arcadia*.

But what manner of fiction is this famous book? As in *Euphues*, *Rosalynde*, and most of the other narratives of the period, the active characters are all of high and noble blood. True, shepherds are there; but as Jusserand points out, they are "for decoration and ornament, to amuse the princes with their songs, and to pull them out of the water when they are drowning."⁴ Basilius, King of Arcadia, retires to the forest with his wife, Gynecia, and two daughters, Philoclea and Pamela. Here, at length, come Pyrocles, Prince of Macedon, and Musidorus, Prince of Thessaly, who fall in love with the daughters in the order named. Pyrocles dresses as a woman and proclaims himself an Amazon. Now begins a long and loose series of adventures, fights, secret meetings, love-ravings, shepherd scenes, songs, philosophical discourses, what not. Pyrocles is so beautiful as a woman that the old King Basilius quite loses his

⁴ *English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare*, p. 236.

head and falls madly in love with the Amazon; while the queen, Gynecia, discovering that the woman is no woman, falls even more desperately in love with him and grows insanely jealous of her daughter, Philoclea. Meanwhile Musidorus is making good progress in his courtship of Pamela. She, of course, must withstand him for a time; but after he has suffered serious vicissitudes she begins to soften, and the way is soon clear for a wedding in that vicinity.

“This last dayes danger having made Pamela’s love discerne what a losse it should have suffered if Dorus had beene destroyed, bred such tendernesse of kindnesse in her toward him that she could no longer keepe love from looking out through her eyes, and going forth in her words; whom before as a close prisoner she had to her heart only committed: so as finding not onely by his speeches and letters, but by the pitifull oration of a languishing behaviour and the easily deciphered character of a sorrowfull face, that despaire began now to threaten him destruction, she grew content both to pitie him, and let him see she pitied him, . . . by making her owne beautifull beames to thaw away the former ycinesse of her behaviour.”

At length the old king, in despair, takes a sleeping potion; his queen is accused of his death; and Musidorus, having been revealed as a man, is accused of complicity. At the proper moment, however, the king returns to life; explanations are made; and Basilius declares his queen to be the most virtuous woman in the world, which she knows she is not, but secretly resolves to deserve such praise.

All this, be it remembered, takes place in an ideal

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land, where every meadow is a shaven green, and where palaces are found in the deep woodlands. "There were hills which garnished their proud heights with stately trees: humble vallies whose base estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers: medowes enameled with all sorts of eie-pleasing flowers: thickets which being lined with most pleasant shade were witnessed so too, by the cheerful disposition of manie well-tuned birds: each pasture stored with sheep feeding with sober securitie, while the prettie lambes with bleating oratorie craved the dammes comfort: here a shepherds boy piping, as though he should never be old: there a young shepheardesse knitting and with all singing, and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to worke, and her hands kept time to her voice's musick."

Nor are the women less beautiful in this land of dreams. See Philoclea on her couch. "She at that time lay, as the heate of that country did well suffer, upon the top of her bed, having her beauties eclipsed with nothing but with her faire smocke, wrought all in flames of ash-colour silk and gold; lying so upon her right side that the left thigh down to the foot yielded her delightfull proportion to the full view, which was seene by the helpe of a rich lampe which thorow the curtaines a little drawne cast forth a light upon her, as the moone doth when it shines into a thinne wood."

These are the beings that live and love in Arcadia. Do they grow in grace? No; it is unnecessary. They are perfection at the beginning. All are tender; all are modest; all are brave. They can stand intense hardships, battles, adventures; but have the disadvan-

tage of being liable to die of love at any moment. But though he makes his characters rather stationary, Sidney makes a sincere effort to put before us clear portrayals of them as they *are*—and ever shall be. We must concede to him an earnest wish to give true pictures of the life under consideration, whether real or ideal. Unconsciously perhaps, he drew us one dramatic, vibrating human being—the queen, Gynecia. She is one of the greater women of fiction. In the throes of a love agony, ready to sacrifice everything to her passion, murderously jealous of her own child, she yet despises herself, and fights a soul conflict scarcely found in any fiction previous to the work of Bunyan.

“O virtue,” she cries, “where doest thou hide thy selfe? What hideous thing is this which doth eclipse thee? or is it true that thou wert never but a vaine name, and no essentiall thing; which hast then left thy professed servant when she had most neede of thy lovely presence? . . . Alas, alas, said she, if there were but one hope for all my paines, or but one excuse for all my faultinesse! But wretch that I am, my torment is beyond all succour, and my evill deserving doth exceed my evill fortune. . . . For nothing else have the winds delivered this strange guest to my country: for nothing else have the destinies reserved my life to this time, but that onely I, most wretched I, should become a plague to my selfe and a shame to woman-kind. Yet if my desire, how unjust soever it be, might take effect, though a thousand deaths followed it, and every death were followed with a thousand shames, yet should not my sepulchre receive me without some contentment. But, alas, so sure I am that Zelmane is such as can an-

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swer my love; yet as sure I am that this disguising must needs come for some foretaken conceit: and then, wretched Gynecia, where canst thou find any small ground plot for hope to dwell upon? No, no, it is Philoclea his heart is set upon, it is my daughter I have borne to supplant me: but if it be so, the life I have given thee, ungratefull Philoclea, I will sooner with these hands bereave thee of than my birth shall glory she hath bereaved me of my desires."

The conviction comes to a critical reader that Sidney gave too free a rein to his fancy. There is no restraint, no logical sequence of incidents, few inevitable endings. There is little Euphuism; but this effort to write poetry in prose form leads to excessive ornamentation. Antitheses meet us often: the repetition of certain pleasing words and phrases, the repeated accenting of certain parts of sentences, the strained personification of the things of nature, in short, the excessive use of conceits—these jar upon the ear of to-day.

In spite of this the book is a volume to love. Its popularity far outlived the next century. In the *Spectator* of April 12, 1711, Addison mentions seeing it on a lady's table; there were two editions of it in 1721; Richardson shows the influence of it; Cowper, in his *Task* (Book III, line 514) praises Sidney, "warbler of poetic prose." It was abbreviated and sold in a form akin to the chap-book; portions were used by poets for themes, as were the Argalus and Parthenia adventures by Francis Quarles; dramas made use of it, such as Day's *Ile of Guls*, 1606, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Jonson's *Every Man out of His Humor*, Shirley's *Pastoral called the Arcadia*, 1640, and Mountfort's *Zelmane*; Dekker, in his

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Guls Horne Booke, advised all the young fellows to “hoarde up the finest play-scraps you can get, upon which your leane wit may most savourly feede for want of other stuffe when the Arcadian and Euphuized gentlewomen have their tongures sharpened to set upon you.”

Books never heard of by Sidney were published over his name; the Countess of Pembroke, as the inspirer of the story, was honored with innumerable dedications. Sidney had left several of the love affairs unfinished, and had given a hint to future writers by remarking that these unsettled portions “may awake some other spirit to exercise his pen in that wherewith mine is already dulled.” The hint was not in vain; several quills flowing a vivid ink undertook to complete the story in such volumes as Gervase Markham’s *English Arcadia*, 1607, Richard Beling’s *Sixth Book to the Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*, 1624, and the *Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney’s Arcadia*, written by “Mrs. A. W.,” 1651.

Imitations, supposedly original in plot, but modeled on the Arcadian style, soon appeared. One specimen gained considerable notice. Lady Mary Wroath, a niece of Sidney, wrote *Urania* and out-Sidneyed Sidney in twisting of phrases, conceits, and love affairs—all the defects but none of the genius. Here the prince and the princess, gorgeously dressed, live in a Greek fairy-land, and, as the book is written by a lady, the descriptions of garments are minute and ravishing. Thus, a book written by a courtier for the eyes of his noble sister, and for no other, completely turned the tide of English fiction and, driving a stilted form of

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language from public admiration, brought in its place a flowery and ornate descriptive style, beautiful, luxurious, musical, but still unnatural. Not until the days of Defoe's plain-spoken words did this massing of images, figures, and harmonious words give way to a more precise and available, even if less lovely, vehicle of thought.

NASH

We have seen how nearly every form of the novel, in the germ at least, has thus far been attempted. Lyly gave us life among the socially high and nobly thinking; Lodge and Sidney produced romantic and pastoral tales; Greene, realistic and often autobiographical, frequently told the story of the lowly man and even of the rogue. Indeed, in Greene we find plausible adventures put down in a matter-of-fact way,—just the form Defoe was to develop so thoroughly in another century. There was need of further development along these practical and earthy lines before the time could be ripe for real masterpieces of fiction, and that development came through the stories known as *picaresque* tales. These, based on models imported from Spain, set forth, not infrequently without enthusiasm, almost without sentiment, mere statements of facts in a rascal's life; their purpose was, at times, to expose scamps and quacks just as Jonson did in his *Alchemist*. This was the work that Thomas Nash undertook, and it was a field extended by Defoe, Richardson, Smollett, and Fielding, and glorified by Dickens.

This man, Thomas Nash (1567–1600) was another specimen of happy-go-lucky Elizabethan manhood.

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Educated at Cambridge, he was a student of keen intellect and extremely wide reading in several languages, a scholar who had fine literary appreciation and who believed that "Destinie never defames herselfe but when she lets an excellent poet die." Yet, he was a lover of laughter and perhaps a little too much a lover of the lowly. He maintained that every story should contain plenty of strong substance and rather condemned the old romances for this very lack of strengthening material. Writing rapidly and often, he produced such pictures of actual life as *Anatomy of Absurdity* (1589), *Pierce Pennilesse*, *His Supplication to the Divell* (1592), *The Unfortunate Traveller, or the Life of Jack Wilton* (1594), and *The Terrors of the Night* (1594)—books not exactly dainty, refined or romantic, but decidedly full of meat. Nash boasts that he is no follower of Euphues, yet he plays with words as Lyly did; his store is rich, and he juggles it well. Undoubtedly *Jack Wilton* is his most famous fiction; illogical and loose as it is, it remains the best English picaresque story before the days of Defoe. Like most tales of the *picaro*, or scamp, it is in the form of an autobiography or memoir; such a form but aids in the effort to present lifelike portraits of lifelike beings. This Wilton is an aristocratic sort of knave. A friend of Henry VIII, he is intimate with royalty at the siege of Tournay. But even in such company his native rascality crops out; for he stoops to the trick of victimizing the camp sutler. See him hoodwink this army Falstaff:

"Why," exclaims Jack, approaching his purpose by flattery, "you are everie childs felowe: any man that

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comes under the name of a souldier and a good felowe, you will sitte and beare companie to the last pot, yea, and you take in as good part the homely phrase of: 'Mine host heeres to you,' as if one saluted you by all the titles of your baronie. These considerations, I saie, which the world suffers to slip by in the channell of carelesnes, have moved me in ardent zeale of your welfare to forewarne you of some dangers that have beset you and your barrels."

Jack, highly amused at the old fellow's terror, takes another drink of free liquor to make his "lie run glib to his journies end," and then informs the sutler that he is soon to be accused of giving military secrets to the enemy by means of letters hidden in wine barrels. Falstaff is in an agony of fear. What's to be done? Jack suggests that he make himself popular among the soldiers by distributing free all his wines and liquors. This advice is followed, to the great delight of Jack's comrades. Thus, whether on the field or in London, the knave is forever making a fool of somebody else.

The volume is full of those details that earlier writers would have left unnoticed, and that Bunyan and Defoe later showed to be the foundation of realism. Jack travels much, visits London, Rome, Venice, and Florence, and, with a fine unconcern for dates, meets More thinking of his *Utopia*, the Earl of Surrey conquering all foes for the sake of beautiful Geraldine, and John of Leyden ascending the scaffold. He attaches himself to the Earl of Surrey, elopes with an Italian lady, and assumes the earl's title himself. He is accused of murder and is sentenced to be hanged, but is saved by an English nobleman; he is captured by Roman Jews; he

sees all kinds of life and experiences many forms of tragedy. Not a few scenes are intense in their unsparring realism. Note, for example, the encounter of Cutwolf and his victim:

“Though I knew God would never have mercie on mee except I had mercie on thee, yet of thee no mercie would I have. . . . I tell thee I would not have undertooke so much toyle to gaine heaven as I have done in pursuing thee for revenge. . . . Looke how my feete are blistered with following thee from place to place. I have riven my throat with overstraining it to curse thee. I have ground my teeth to powder with grating and grinding them together for anger when anie hath nam'd thee. My tongue with vaine threatens is bolne and waxen too big for my mouth.”

The victim offered to do anything to be saved. Then the fiendish Cutwolf bade him give his soul to the devil, and the man called down terrible curses upon himself and blasphemed God. The blasphemer then with his own blood wrote a contract to the devil and uttered prayers that God would never forgive his soul. “My joints trembled and quakt with attending them,” says Cutwolf, “my haire stood upright, and my hart was turned wholly to fire.” The man’s soul thus being destroyed, Cutwolf shot him through the mouth lest there be words of repentance, and the revenge was accomplished. “His body being dead looked as black as a toad.”

This scene drives Wilton to repentance, and having married a Venetian woman, he returns to the service of the English king and leads a decent life henceforth.

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Here is a direct effort to tell the story of a human being's life,—not an Arthurian knight's, not a Euphuistic philosopher's, not an Arcadian lover's, but a breathing, thinking rogue's, whose soul, far from stationary, has its ups and downs and retrogression and progress toward a different plane. Thus a book almost unnoticed in this day shows a long step forward in the evolution of fiction; for before the day of Defoe only one other writer, Bunyan, gives a more connected and more complete story of the life of a fictitious character. There had been up to this time a lack of logical sequence; this Nash partly remedies. He makes a successful effort to produce a lengthy and sustained chain of possible incidents. He omits the flowery language of the past. He gives us no improbable scenery nor sixteenth-century Round Table knights. He wrote the novel of actual life nearly seventy years before Defoe was born.

CHETTLE

Again, there were, of course, imitations of this sort of fiction, although not so many as of the romantic. For example, Henry Chettle—who spent a great deal of his time in jail and therefore should have known something about rogues—wrote *Piers Plainnes Seven Yeares Prentiship* (1595). Piers is a shepherd rascal in the midst of poetic surroundings. He sits down and tells us, in the first person, what he knows of this world of men, whether kings or rustics, princes or paupers. In his descriptions of low life he is barely surpassed by Nash, and in his pictures of the aristocracy we find the same sureness and confidence. See his queen, a

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figure from the old romances thrust in among the things of a harsher modern world:

“On her head she wore a coronet of orientall pearle; on it a chaplet of variable flowers perfuming the ayre with their divers odors, thence carelessly descended her amber coloured hair. . . . Her buskins were richly wrought like the Delphins spangled cabazines; her quiver was of unicornes horne, her darts of yvorie; in one hand she held a boare speare, the other guided her Barbary jennet, proud by nature, but nowe more proud in that he carried natures fairest worke, the Easterne worlds chiefe wonder.”

DEKKER

Thomas Dekker's realistic pamphlets are also in the Nash fashion,—such works as *News from Hell* (1606), *The Belman of London* (1608), and the *Guls Horne Booke* (1609). Here, as in Greene and Nash, are touches of the pathetic and of a gentle beauty; often there is the graceful or poetical; but the most notable trait is keen, unsparing observation. Dekker is not overcome, however, by the roughness or harshness of his scenes. See this “goodly fat burger . . . with a belly arching out like a beere-barrell, which made his legges, that were thicke and short, like two piles driven under London bridge. . . . In some corners of (his nose) there were blewish holes that shone like shelles of mother of pearle; . . . others were richly garnisht with rubies, chrisolites, and carbunkles, which glistered so oriently that the Hamburgers offered I know not how many dollars for his companie in an East-Indian

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voyage to have stooode a nightes in the poope of their Admirall onely to save the charge of candles.”

Doubtless Dekker's most famous fiction is his *Guls Horne Book*, one of the best volumes on character and manners produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Here we may follow a gallant through the London streets and observe minutely his fads, his tricks, his eccentricities, his shams, his human longing for notice and notoriety. Here he is in the playhouse of Shakespeare's day. He takes a seat on the stage in the midst of the actors and in such a manner as to hide half the action from the hissing audience. “What large commings-in are pursd up by sitting on the stage? First a conspicuous eminence is gotten; by which meanes the best and most essencial parts of a gallant (good cloathes, a proportionable legge, white hand, the Persian lock, and a tollerable beard) are perfectly revealed. . . . Present not your selfe on the stage, especially at a new play, until the quaking Prologue hath, by rubbing, got (color) into his cheekes and is ready to give the trumpets their cue that hees upon point to enter; for then it is time, as though you were one of the properties, or that you dropt out of the hangings, to creepe from behind the arras with your tripos or three-footed stoole in one hand and a teston [six-pence] mounted betweene a forefinger and a thumbe in the other. . . . It shall crowne you with rich commendations to laugh alowd in the midst of the most serious and saddest scene of the terriblest tragedy; and to let that clapper, your tongue, be tost so high that all the house may ring to it. . . . Rise with a screwd

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and discontented face from your stool to be gone. . . .
And being on your feet, sneake not away like a coward;
but salute all your gentle acquaintance that are spread
either on the rushes or on stooles about you; and draw
what troope you can from the stage after you. . . .”

RISE OF PROSE

And now, before we may close this study of the fiction of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we must see how the overstraining of this fashionable display, the endeavor to be both brave and dainty, the mingling of impossible romance with possible realism brought on the downfall of the old styles of story-telling; and further see how the humble tales from the heart of a scorned street-preacher were to bring forth a new form of realism, containing in addition to external facts an introspectiveness, an analysis of emotion, a touch of the universal soul seemingly impossible to earlier writers.

Early in the seventeenth century it must have become apparent to many observers that English prose was fast coming into its own. Such works as Richard Hooker's sermons, the *Book of Common Prayer* (1550), Fox's *Book of Martyrs* (1563), Holinshed's *Chronicle* (1577), North's *Plutarch* (1579), Hakluyt's *Voyages* (1581), Raleigh's writings, Bacon's *Essays* (1597, 1625), Sir Thomas Browne's essays, Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying* (1650), Richard Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest* (1649), Milton's controversial papers, and the numerous descriptions of scenes and events in America compelled deference for English prose from even the most poetic and scholarly. It must be remembered,

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also, that the old folk-stories, such as the Robin Hood legends, *Guy of Warwick*, *Friar Bacon*, and *Amadis of Gaul*, were now frequently reprinted, and the common reader doubtless learned to prefer prose to poetry as a means of narrative.

The coming of the Puritans greatly reduced the publishing of these "vain" and "ungodly" tales; but among more aristocratic circles their place was filled by the imported French fiction. This was the day when Scudéry and other French romancers gained an immense influence in the islands; we find *Polexandre* translated in 1647, *Cassandre* in 1652, *Le Grand Cyrus* in 1653 and *Clelie* in 1656; and such impossible and sometimes truly "ungodly" stories were gladly received in spite of the Puritans. Many of these translations were profusely illustrated, and must have been expensive; but their sale was so profitable as to induce many men and women with little literary ability to turn their hands to the task.

DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE

Now, as a result of this, there came into popularity a strange sort of refined heroism. The old-time heroes mentioned above and those imported from Paris were made more fashionable, more dainty, more particular in dress, more stately in their language, much more philosophical, in short, very civilized; and these new traits with their primitive bravery made them the admiration of the lady readers of the day. And the ladies, in their admiration, gathered together the literary dames, damsels, and gentlemen of the neighborhood, and betook themselves to translating other French romances and at length

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to imitating these. Catherine Phillips was a noted leader of such a movement; while the Duchess of Newcastle, gathering such a group in her country home, attempted romances, heroic tales, dialogues of wise advice, all forms known to man—or to her ladyship alone. Her *Sociable Letters* (1664) comes close to being a novel on the Richardson plan, and is so good that one can see some slight reason for the enthusiastic notoriety granted her by seventeenth-century aristocracy.

BOYLE

Among the devotees of this French heroic daintiness or dainty heroism the three most important were Roger Boyle (Earl of Orrery), Mrs. Manley, and Mrs. Aphra Behn. In the writings of these three one might find enough passion and adventures to arouse even the melancholy Jacques, enough sentimentality to make even Jago weep, and enough voluptuous sin to make even Cleopatra have a bad taste in her mouth. *Parthenissa* (1664), the best of Boyle's novels, tells of a hero, Artabanus, a Median prince, handsome and cultured, who at the Parthian court falls in love with Parthenissa, and does all sorts of wonderful deeds to show her what a man he is. Parthenissa seems, however, to prefer another, and he determines to be a hermit on the Alpine peaks. Pirates change his plans by selling him as a slave, but he escapes and reveals himself as the historic Spartacus. He now discovers that Parthenissa, worried by a distasteful lover, has taken a potion which causes her to appear dead. To secure divine aid he goes to the Temple of Hieropolis (wherever that may be), "where the queen of Love had settled an oracle as

famous as the Deity to whom it was consecrated.” Artabanes tells his misfortunes to the priest; the priest tells his in reply and reveals himself as the father of Cæsar’s Nicomedes. While listening to this long-winded story, Artabanes observes a young knight and a lady enter a neighboring wood. The lady is the exact image of his Parthenissa! The poor lover is in bewilderment and despair. Was it she, or was she still lying asleep hundreds of miles away, or had she died and was this her spirit? We shall never know. Boyle abruptly closes the tale at this point. Of course source-hunting scholars will at once accuse Frank Stockton’s *The Lady and the Tiger* of being an impudent piece of plagiarism.

MANLEY

This story, unlike his *English Adventures by a Person of Honor*, is at least respectable in its morality; but Mrs. Manley’s works fairly reek with impurity. While still a girl, Mrs. Manley was ruined, and much of her life was given up to the wildest licentiousness. We may justly expect, therefore, to find indecency at the root of all her plots. One of her earlier works, *The Power of Love in Seven Novels*, describes beastly passion in a manner that shows her destitute of all self-restraint. Her *Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality in Both Sexes*—her most prominent work—contains in its four volumes some of the most suggestive chronicling of disgusting crime to be found in any literature. What Mrs. Manley did not know, her hot imagination easily furnished, and her gloating appetite for the animal in man could arise only in a true degenerate.

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We learn in this story that a woman named Astræa, having long abandoned the earth, decides to view it once more. She lands upon the island Atalantis in the Mediterranean, and meets a worn-out creature, once the beautiful Mother Virtue. These two, traveling along, meet Intelligence, who relates bits of scandal that make Mother Virtue look still more worn. Mrs. Nightwork, a midwife, joins the party, and the current of filthy narrative is at the flood. Atalantis is England, of course, and the various names given are those of prominent leaders of English society. That the shoe must have fit is evidenced by the fact that Mrs. Manley was arrested and prosecuted; but that it was a very neat fit is further evidenced by the fact that the case was soon dropped. This, then, was the kind of literature that the court of Charles II reveled in, and the sort, too, that lived on into the days of Pope, who, in his *Rape of the Lock*, remembers it in the words, "As long as *Atalantis* shall be read."

BEHN

Many readers will remember that Sir Walter Scott knew an old lady "who assured him that in her younger days Mrs. Behn's novels were as currently upon the toilette as the works of Miss Edgeworth at present; and described with some humor her own surprise when the book falling into her hands after a long interval of years, and when its contents were quite forgotten, she found it impossible to endure, at the age of fourscore what at fifteen she, like all the fashionable world of the time, had perused without an idea of impropriety." This Mrs. Behn, of good family it seems, early went

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with her father to the West Indies, where she saw slavery and lawlessness in their worst form. She at length married a wealthy Dutchman named Behn, and while living with him in the Netherlands, served as a British spy. As she seems to have had plenty of influential lovers, she evidently found no difficulty in gaining valuable information. In later years she returned to London and spent her time in writing. She was buried in Westminster Abbey in 1689.

If she had written only her plays we could easily judge her character; for their vileness fully warranted her title of "the female Wycherley." But, unfortunately, we may find even more clearly her degraded ideals in such books as her *Fair Jilt*, her *Ladies' Looking Glass to Dress Themselves By, or the Whole Art of Charming All Mankind*, and her *Lover's Watch, or the Art of Making Love: Being Rules for Courtship for Every Hour of the Day and Night*. Her one famous book, however, is, strange to say, very respectable in tone. *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* (1698) is a novel of interest and valuable in discerning the trend of English fiction in the last days of the seventeenth century. Here indeed is a thorough mingling of the romantic and the realistic with a plain endeavor to make the one as well as the other entirely plausible. Mrs. Behn claims that she saw and conversed with this kingly slave in the West Indies, and it was at the request of King Charles to whom she told the story that it was written down and published. "I have often seen and conversed with this great man and been a witness to many of his mighty actions, and do assure my readers the most illustrious court could not have produced a braver man

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both for greatness of courage and mind, a judgment more solid, a wit more quick, and a conversation more sweet and diverting. . . . He had an extreme good and graceful mien and all the civility of a well-bred great man.”

Oroonoko, a negro, the grandson of an African king, falls in love with the beautiful negress, Imoinda. The old king also falls in love with her and has her brought to his castle. Oroonoko, mad with love, seeks her in the palace at night, and is discovered. The old monarch in his jealousy sells the girl; while Oroonoko is soon captured and suffers the same fate. Brought to the West Indies, he finds Imoinda there, and soon they are allowed to marry. But of course a prince could not long brook slavery; he raises a revolt, has a battle, is captured and beaten, and his wounds are rubbed with red pepper. Escaping with his wife to the woods, he kills her lest she fall captive to the white man, and sits, wounded and without food, by her body for several days before he is discovered. Taken captive again, he is tied to a post, chopped to pieces, and burned.

Here is an effort to glorify the “child of Nature.” Later Rousseau is to bestow great praise upon the savage state; “everything is well when it comes fresh from the hands of the Maker of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man.” Years before this, however, Mrs. Behn compelled the sympathy and admiration of the hard-headed British for a black slave thousands of miles away, and, furthermore, compelled some admiration for the primitive and therefore (according to herself and Rousseau) the noble. This negro prince is handsome, learned, dignified; men feel constrained to bow

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before him ; he is a natural leader and monarch. Anglo-Saxon civilization suffers in the comparison ; the whites are brutal tyrants, earthy beings who cannot comprehend this black man's innate nobility. Then, too, as a forerunner of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, it shows the ability of the novel to assail a theory or a practice in a manner many times more powerful than that used in a logical but abstract essay or dissertation. Romantic as many of the incidents are, this novel gains its power by its show of personal knowledge, its attention to details, its endeavor to picture a possible life, in short, its realism. Thus out of a silly imitation of silly French romances had developed a work of some strength, containing some impossible events, but, in the main, plausible because of its natural scenes, its characterization, and its patient statement of a series of events apparently in an unexaggerated manner. These are the very elements that Defoe was to become master of, and the very elements that the tinker of Bedford Jail, ignorant of French romances, was unconsciously developing at this very period.

BUNYAN

John Bunyan, "chief of sinners," in his own opinion, and chief of seventeenth-century realists, in the critics' opinion, was born near Bedford in 1628. A lowly mender of pots, as his father had been before him, uneducated in books, but full of the knowledge born of experience and inner thought, he learned to know the human soul as no previous writer save Shakespeare had known it. His life was one of intense spiritual conflict. In his youth, according to his autobiographical *Grace*

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Abounding, he was a blasphemer, a liar, the ringleader in wickedness. But he married a pious woman, whose only dowry was two books, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*, and this woman's conversation, together with the reading of these two volumes, put his already abnormally tender conscience to still deeper thought. He renounced his sins, became a regular church-goer, and gained the commendation of all people for his godly life. But still his soul was troubled. He heard certain women speak of the "perfect peace of God," and the longing to experience this became so great that he went to Mr. Gifford, a preacher of Bedford, and through this man's teaching "was filled full of comfort and hope." "Yea," he exclaims, "I was now so taken with the love and mercy of God that I remember I could not tell how to contain till I got home. I thought I could have spoken of his love and have told of his mercy to me even to the very crows that sat upon the plowed lands before me, had they been capable to have understood me." The man who could feel, realize, and visualize soul activities so keenly could not but produce pictures masterly in their vividness, were he to touch pen to paper.

Having joined the Baptist congregation at Bedford, he soon gained fame as an irresistible speaker. But when Charles II came to the throne, the Act of Uniformity was once more enforced, and Bunyan was in 1660 cast into Bedford Jail, where he remained twelve years, for "devilishly and perniciously abstaining from coming to church to hear divine service, and upholding unlawful meetings and conventicles."

Time has proved that this was the very trial needed

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to bring forth the latent genius of Bunyan. Long years of silent thought and introspection developed his spiritual insight and his power of visualization until the things of God became as concrete to him as the walls of his cells. There with only the memory of his wife's two books and the presence of his Bible and Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, he penned those immortal lines: "As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept, I dreamed a dream." That mighty vision, published in 1678 under the title, *Pilgrim's Progress*, has been more widely read than any other book except the Bible, and to the end of time it will remain one of the greatest symbolical pictures of the struggling soul of humanity. Those who believed that only vast learning could produce a masterpiece denied the possibility of his having written it; but the sturdy tinker put them to scorn by writing a second part, wherein the wife and children of Christian reached the Celestial City.

Without pride, without self-glorification, but simply for the good of his fellow men, this strange man of genuine piety followed his famous classic with such books as the *Holy War*, which treat of the mighty conflict of Shaddai and Diabolus for the conquest of that fair city, "Mansoul," and *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, one of the most realistic character sketches in all literature, a work which apparently influenced Defoe in his portrayal of low life, and Fielding in his *Jonathan Wild the Great*. Released from prison in 1673, Bunyan became pastor of a Bedford congregation and preached almost daily either there or in London.

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The crowds that came to listen were often so vast that he had to be lifted over the heads of his congregation to the pulpit stairs. Thus in godly exercise he passed his busy years. His life was sacrificed in an errand of love. To reconcile a father and a son, he made a long journey on horseback to their home, and, being drenched by rain, was seized with a fever and, after a ten-days' illness, died in August, 1688.

"Other allegorists have pleased the fancy or gratified the understanding, but Bunyan occupies at once the imagination, the reason, and the heart of his reader."⁴ How does he do it? In the first place, he saw images with a vividness vouchsafed to few men in the flesh. There is no haziness in any figure he presents; the deed, the scene, the character, stand sharp and clear before us. We know forevermore the subject portrayed for us. In the second place, as an analyst of the human soul he is a born psychologist. As we read, we are overwhelmed with the impression that these inner struggles are real, true, and universal. Universal—that is the fitting word for those sorrows, joys, and longings experienced by the hero marching toward the City on High. Who shall escape the Slough of Despond? Who shall not climb the Hill Difficulty? Who shall not moan in Doubting Castle? Who shall not weep in the Valley of Humiliation? And who shall escape the Valley of the Shadow of Death?

This man of "ignorance" has sounded the depths of the universal soul; he has shown us what we know ourselves to be. There is another form of realism in this work, however,—the realism of his own day. The peo-

⁴ Tuckerman: *History of English Prose Fiction*, p. 109.

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ple who live in these pages had walked the streets of Bedford or London with him; the trial of Christian and Faithful in *Vanity Fair* is just such a trial as he and many another man suffered in the English courts of Charles' day. He built, not on dreams alone, but on the hard facts of this harsh world. Again, in his fiery zeal to save men's souls, he disdained the artificial devices of language; his eloquence is the eloquence of directness and sincerity. Macaulay is right when he declares that Bunyan's vocabulary is the vocabulary of the common people. "Yet no writer has said more exactly what he meant to say. For magnificence, for pathos, for vehement exhortation, for subtle disquisition, for every purpose of the poet, the orator, and the divine, this homely dialect, the dialect of the plain workingman, was sufficient."

Here, then, is the same earnest effort we demand in modern fiction—the effort to investigate sincerely and accurately the problem of life and character, not as they might be, but as they are. No more fantastic dreams, no more dainty juggling with ideas, but the zealous endeavor to solve this mighty enigma of humanity and its soul. This was the man and these the books that, reaching down to the dregs of English life, and reaching up to the froth of it, too, changed for all time the course of the current that has flowed with such mighty volume and with such beneficent effects through the last two centuries of our social development.

CHAPTER VI

THE FICTION OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

SOCIAL AND LITERARY CONDITIONS

As far as moral and intellectual conditions are concerned, the eighteenth century readily divides itself into two periods: the first from 1700 to 1760, a time of unabashed indecency, political intrigue, and tyranny; and, second, from 1760 to 1800, a period of slow but clearly perceivable change in personal, social, and public ideals. It is doubtful whether any other years of English life were more shameful than those when Addison and Steele were striving to "make morality fashionable." Great attention was being given to purity and clearness of literary style; but such traits were by no means deemed essential in the style of life followed by high and low in that day. Constitutional government had come to stay. The Whigs and the Tories became two exceedingly distinct parties; politics developed a corruptness never known before in the kingdom. Defoe declares that seats in Parliament were openly sold for one thousand guineas. England and Scotland were completely united in 1707; there were great victories abroad; the public enthusiasm was high in its hopes and purposes; but the islands themselves were full of brutality and vice. Cock-fighting was allowed in the schools; bull baiting was a favorite London sport twice a week; the theaters were daring in

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their vulgar jokes and personalities. The London coffee-houses, numbering three thousand in 1708, in early days resorts of brilliant wits and poets, were now too often filled with card-players. Women showed an astonishing taste for this sort of gambling. The introduction of gin gave rise to a vicious form of drunkenness unknown in the days of milder beverages, and as a result London's streets, always dark and dangerous at night, now frequently became the scenes of fearful orgies and murderous assaults. Well might old Sir Roger de Coverley look to his guard when he wished to go to the theater. Newspapers and magazines had a rather wide reading among the city folk of the higher rank, and a man with a sharp wit and plentiful store of cynicism might easily gain a livelihood with his pen; but outside the great city there was a vast horde of people, both aristocratic and common, who scarcely ever glanced at a book or journal, and whose education, in a multitude of cases, amounted to little more than the ability to write a crude hand.

True religion seems almost to have vanished from the land. Montesquieu declared that every one laughed if religion was even mentioned. We have records that a witch was burned near London in 1712, and that various preachers of the day prosecuted the case. Those preachers of the 18th century—what might not be said of them, if modern decency did not forbid. The literature of the age is full of contemptuous pictures of them. Graves, a preacher himself, speaking in his *Spiritual Quixote* of a fat gentleman says: "By his dress, indeed, I should have taken him for a country clergyman, but that he never drank ale or smoked to-

bacco." Mrs. Edgeworth's *Belinda* gives us a portrayal of a parson: "It was the common practice of this man to leap from his horse at the church door after following a pack of hounds, huddle on his surplice and gabble over the service with the most indecent mockery of religion. Do I speak with acrimony? I have reason. It was he who first taught my lord to drink. Then he was a wit—an insufferable wit. His conversation after he had drank, was such as no woman but Harriet Freke could understand, and such as few *gentlemen* could hear. I have never, alas, been thought a prude, but in the hey-day of my youth and gaiety this man always disgusted me. In one word, he was a buck parson."

Harriet, the heroine in Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*, describes a sort of reverent rascal all too common in her day: "A vast, tall, big-boned, splay-footed man; a shabby gown; as shabby a wig; a huge and pimply face; and a nose that hid half of it when he looked on one side, and he seldom looked fore-right when I saw him. He had a dog-eared Common Prayer-book in his hand, which once had been gilt, opened, horrid sight! at the page of matrimony. . . . The man snuffled his answers through his nose. When he opened his pouched mouth, the tobacco hung about his great yellow teeth. He squinted upon me, and took my clasped hands, which were buried in his huge hand." Even those who were not positively vicious were often indeed like Dr. Bartlett, Sir Charles Grandison's chaplain, cold-blooded, passive beings who, though doing no great evil, certainly did no positive good. Parson Adams, described in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, a preacher who, when the golden rule failed used his fist,

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and Dr. Primrose, in Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, were glaring exceptions in their native kindness of heart, self-forgetful simplicity, and energetic Christianity.

The well-founded scandal heard in both den and drawing-room, is nothing short of shocking to the refined woman of to-day. My Lady This and My Lady That gathered at social functions, and, as Pope says,

At ev'ry word a reputation dies.

These ladies shrieked such bits of conversation as: "The devil! They seem to put her on a course of the bitters!" "Why, the devil, did she not make her appearance? I suppose the prude was afraid of my demolishing and unrigging her!"¹

Writers on the subject have pleaded that we must not condemn the frankness or coarseness of the day as immorality. Men and women of the eighteenth century more often called a spade a spade than we of this day. This declaration doubtless contains truth; but back of the loud voices, the impolite words, the frequent profanity, there were too often hearts burning with bestial passions and remembrances and prospects of lustful pleasures. It is too evident that wedlock, often based upon a financial transaction, was looked upon as a very loose bond indeed. It is plain, also, that every man, before settling down, had to make his round of heavy drinking, gambling, fighting, and adultery. It is undeniable that inns hung out signs with the words: "Drunk for one penny, dead drunk for two pennies, straw for nothing." Harsh laws were created for the

¹ Edgeworth's *Belinda*.

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criminal classes, and yet no effort was made to reach the causes of the increase in crime. Until 1736 there were absolutely no public lights in the London streets. Such a condition was a tempting invitation to such rowdies as the "dancing masters" who amused themselves by pricking people with their swords, the "tumblers," who stood women on their heads and then rolled them downhill in barrels, and the *Modocs* who "tupped the lion," that is, beat a man's nose flat and then gouged out his eyes with their fingers. As death was the penalty for almost every crime, the criminal was looked upon as a hero, and, in the novels, was frequently described with but thinly veiled admiration. The clergy had deserted their high position as examples of righteousness, and as a result were ridiculed in the city and humiliated in the country. The "Fleet parsons" not only readily performed illegal marriages, but kept saloons and taverns and furnished a free meal, free drinks, and a free bed with each marriage.

George II acquainted his wife with all his disgusting love intrigues, giving her minute descriptions of the appearance and physique of his victims, and even naming prices paid. Is it any wonder that Swift, in his *Gulliver's Travels*, vented his insane rage by heaping insults upon all mankind? The complexity of the new social life had brought too much and too sudden power to the average man; a too sudden gift of political privileges had brought a new corruption among the common folk; the old laws and old religion, sufficient indeed for the former simple life, had now been far outgrown. A temporary chaos of vulgar display, bestiality, riotous vice, and universal dishonesty naturally resulted. Says

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Hervey, in his *Memoirs*. "The king and queen looked upon human kind as so many commodities in a market, which, without favor or affection they considered only in the degree they were useful, and paid for them in that proportion, Sir Robert Walpole being sworn appraiser to their majesties at all these sales."

The Anglo-Saxon race, however, has always possessed too much moral stamina to remain long in the mire of bestial vice. We find here and there a voice raised in protest. We find, for instance, in Richardson's *Correspondence* a young lady's protesting against Sterne's indecent suggestions in *Tristram Shandy*: "I am horribly out of humor with the present taste which makes people ashamed to own they have not read what, if fashion did not authorize, they would with more reason blush to say they had read. Perhaps some polite person from London may have forced this piece into your hands; but give it not a place in your library; let not *Tristram Shandy* be ranked among the well-chosen authors there. It is indeed a little book and little is its merit, though great has been the writer's reward. Unaccountable wildness, whimsical digressions, comical incoherences, uncommon indecencies, all with an air of novelty, have caught the reader's attention and applause has flown from one to another till it is almost singular to disapprove. . . . But mark my prophecy, . . . that this ridiculous compound will be the cause of many more productions witless and humorless perhaps, but indecent and absurd, till the town will be punished for undue encouragement by being poisoned with disgusting nonsense."

It was upon this middle class, in or near the larger

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cities, that regeneration had to depend; the aristocracy were too basely immoral, the common folk too basely ignorant. These middle-class folk of the city, however, *had* to be respected. They were industrious; they were the wealth producers; their demands brought better highways, canals, safety from robbery; they were heavy tax-payers. From a financial standpoint they compelled regard. Though solemn and stiff and often ridiculous in their efforts to appear aristocratic, they were at heart religious, and had indeed a profound regard for propriety. Then, too, back in 1703, there had been born a genius named John Wesley, and toward the middle of the century he and his brother Charles were to raise a flame of religion that by its very ardor drove sin into hiding, and compelled the hostile churches to purify their own temples. Thus the change for the better began. In the later years of the eighteenth century the novel still contained vulgarity; vicious characters were still portrayed; but such elements were not so frequent; they became more and more incidental, rather than essential.

Some may ask: Why such a polished style in such a filthy age? Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that the most highly intellectual in this day were longing for, seeking and demanding *order*—order in every department of life. Order could not yet be secured in private and public life, but this very desire for rules so badly needed in all other activities of the time, showed itself most strongly in that most intellectual field of all—the literary. The result was a reign of “classicism.” Thus it happens that in the eighteenth century we have side by side the strangely contradictory traits of a de-

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graded domestic and civic life and of a literature slavishly subservient to regulations and conventionalities. The highest intellects of the age spoke in poetry, and therefore the tendency was most evident in it; the lesser genius expressed itself in prose fiction, and there classicism is least evident. One trait, the subordination of the fancy to the reason, is, however, plain in the fiction, and from the days of Defoe, who "lied like truth" until near the close of the century, this subordination is very evident in all narratives.

Steadily, also, prose was gaining respect. Indeed, the poets in their field did not often reach the same high level as Addison and Steele, Gibbon and Burke, reached in theirs. The essay largely took the place of the poem in influencing the thoughtful classes. Said Walpole, in a letter to Sir H. Mann, in 1742. "'T is an age most unpoetical. 'T is even a test of wit to dislike poetry. . . . I do not think an author would be universally commended for any production in verse unless it were an ode to the Secret Committee, with rhymes of liberty and property, nation and administration.'" The care bestowed upon prose far surpassed that granted in any previous day. Socially and politically it paid to be able to write a strong convincing style. Tuckerman has summed it up well when he says: "Literary success was a passport to the houses and the intimacy of the great."²

The eighteenth century was the logical time for the transition from the play to the novel. In Shakespeare's day comparatively few in either town or country could read, and in the metropolis intellectual

² Tuckerman: *History of English Prose Fiction*, p. 136.

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pleasure vested itself in the theater, and in the rural districts expressed itself in the mystery, miracle, and morality plays. But now a much larger percentage of the people, especially in the cities, could read, and as the play had inevitably lost much of its originality and freshness, it was but natural for the educated to look to the printed page for entertainment. Moreover, the novel, as we have seen, had been slowly evolving for some years. The "character" writers of the previous century had presented clearly delineated beings; Defoe had been making the impossible appear highly probable; Addison and Steele were preparing the way by means of charming essays, half fiction in contents and form. The novel, therefore, seemingly but not in reality, *burst* into existence, suddenly reached a great height, and then, before the close of the century, almost as suddenly declined. Its entire period of flourishing existence might be limited to the thirty years between 1740 and 1770. Gosse, somewhat shortening the period, divides it into three sections:³ (1) the days of *Pamela*, *Joseph Andrews*, *David Simple*, and *Jonathan Wild*, when the tales were interesting, but somewhat crude in the telling and the character development; (2) the days of *Clarissa Harlowe*, *Roderick Random*, *Tom Jones*, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Amelia*, and *Sir Charles Grandison*, when the stories were masterly in both plot and character; (3) the days of *Tristram Shandy*, *Rasselas*, the *Adventures of a Guinea*, the *Castle of Otranto*, and the *Vicar of Wakefield*, when there seems to have been a lack of admirable plots, but some keen, accurate, and charming pictures of characters. After these came a period of

³ *Eighteenth-Century Literature*, p. 243.

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decline, and only now and then novels, such as *Humphrey Clinker*, *Evelina*, and *Caleb Williams* rose above the general plane of mediocrity. One fact was clearly set forth by the century as a necessary element in all future fiction: that true, vivid portrayal and analysis of emotions must be the basis of all successful narrative. The old type of impossible romances was dead. It is true, Robert Paltock (1697?–1767?) wrote as late as 1751 a tale of the obsolete sort, *Peter Wilkins*, the story of a sailor who found near the South Pole winged men and women; but he was a lonely exception, and stood so far aside from the general march of progress that his book could not attain prolonged success.

We shall find, also, that eighteenth-century fiction readily divides itself into two classes according to subject: that of domestic life, such as *Clarissa Harlowe* or *Evelina*, where a virtuous woman is generally pitted against a libertine, and that of the lowly life, such as *Roderick Random*, where the story, generally comic, frequently uses virtue as an object of ridicule. Both kinds contain bold, broad streaks of immorality. The Rev. Mr. Graves, author of the *Spiritual Quixote*, might say in defense: “I am convinced that *Don Quixote* or *Gil Blas*, *Clarissa* or *Sir Charles Grandison* will furnish more hints for correcting the follies and regulating the morals of young persons, and impress them more forcibly on their minds than volumes of severe precepts, seriously delivered, and dogmatically enforced.” But we of to-day are more likely to agree with a modern critic who declares: “Love degenerates into mere animal passion and almost every woman has to guard her chastity—if indeed she cares to guard it at all—against

the approaches of man as the sworn enemy of her virtue. The language of the characters abounds in oaths and gross expressions, and to swear loudly and to drink deeply are the common attributes of fashionable as well as vulgar life. The heroines allow themselves to take part in conversations which no modest woman could have heard without a blush." Well might a comedy of the middle century, George Coleman's *Polly Honeycomb*, close with the exclamation, "Zounds! . . . a man might as well turn his daughter loose in Covent Garden as trust the cultivation of her mind to a circulating library."

"SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY"

The importance of the seventeenth-century "character" writers in the building of the novel has been indicated. It is this very sort of work that makes Addison and Steele powerful influences in eighteenth-century fiction. They undoubtedly made clear the way that led to natural, true narrative. The *Tatler* of 1709 and the *Spectator* of 1711 brought conciseness and elegance to a prose that had been altogether too slovenly; but far beyond this in importance was the appearance of that admirable character, Sir Roger de Coverley, and his famous group. Sir Roger is one of the clearest and most living figures in all the world's literature, and but a bit more of plot would have made him the hero of the first great English novel. We are given glimpses of his youth; we see him in his declining years; we have even a description of his death; these, placed in a logical sequence, would have proved excellent material for either fiction or drama. There is even a hint of a love

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plot in the work. That widow cast her bewitching eyes upon him and he fell like a great surprised booby; but she proved too witty and learned for Sir Roger, and he never felt at ease while in her presence. "This barbarity," says he, "has left me ever at a distance from the most beautiful object my eyes ever beheld."

It is marvelous with how few touches this hardy, old-fashioned Englishman is put before us a living, thinking, heartfelt being. He was so human that Johnson could not grant him whole-souled admiration—a sure test of truthfulness in imaginary characterization. The wise old Doctor thought his conduct too irregular, because of "habitual rusticity and that negligence which solitary grandeur naturally generates," and, doubtless thinking of the squire's frequent references to the widow, declared that he had "flying vapors of incipient madness which from time to time cloud reason without eclipsing it." The fact is the character was so real that Johnson, now divorced from rural humanity, could not clearly appreciate it.

Sir Roger shows his literary ancestors to have been those "characters" portrayed by men of morals in the previous century. They had shown a man of kindness, a man of religions, a man of cheerfulness, and so on, but here were the abstractions made living in the flesh, and in *one* flesh at that. It is a far cry from the filthy creatures of Mrs. Manley's imagination to the healthy cleanliness of this normal man. Addison and Steele did indeed endeavor to make morality fashionable; but they undertook the work, not like Swift, by exaggerating depravity, but by picturing a human being almost ideal. Sir Roger has that enviable power given only

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to the greatest figures in fiction; he is your companion for ever more. Here, then, was a hero. Here were incidents, comments on life, environments described, motives analyzed, some clash of wills, even the outlines of a love affair. Everything was present for the complete novel except the logical sequence of actions. Defoe possessed astonishing ability in making events seem logical; he could associate incidents with a character until they seemed of the very essence of that being. If Defoe, with his peculiar genius, could have combined with Addison, in the story of this country squire, English literature would have been enriched with a strong novel thirty years before Richardson penned his epoch-making *Pamela*.

DANIEL DEFOE

I have said that Defoe possessed an astonishing ability to make events seem logical. It was because Defoe knew *life* with an accuracy granted to but few men. Swift, too, had this insight into human nature; but he preferred to picture only the worst phases. Addison knew the world; but he preferred to picture the ideal. Defoe surpassed them both in this knowledge, and he preferred to picture men as they *are*. From the standpoint of fiction, therefore, he is of greater importance. Defoe had tried many occupations. He had lived in city and country, in England and on the Continent. He had seen practically every phase of civilized existence. When, therefore, at the age of fifty-eight, he began that wonderful story of the lone dweller on a far-away island, he was as well prepared as mortal could be to tell the story of a man. And just there is

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a reason for his undying fame. He knew what the people wanted, because he was one of the people, and he placed before them in minute detail one of their own number at the common daily tasks of life. He realized that all readers love to hear the story of another man's life—its struggles, failures, and victories; he could, indeed, have agreed with Carlyle that biography was, after all, the most fascinating form of literature. It had, therefore, long been his custom whenever a noted or notorious character died, to publish immediately a "life" of the deceased. Doubtless at first he tried to make such narratives true; but, finding that the surprising paid, he began to invent incidents, and thus gradually drifted into fiction. In other words, he began by presenting real persons in real scenes, passed from that to presenting fictitious persons in real scenes, and at length passed into the third stage, that of presenting fictitious persons in fictitious scenes. As Minto⁴ says, "From writing biographies with real names attached to them, it was but a short step to writing biographies with fictitious names." When an author does that, he comes dangerously near writing a novel.

Defoe's experience in writing biography had taught him the value of exact statement and minute details, and it was by means of this very massing of seemingly unimportant and often trivial details that he constructed a narrative never excelled in convincing realism. There is about his manner of relating events a certain cold-bloodedness which forces upon us an impression that he is merely an impersonal historian, and this is exactly what he wished to be considered. He de-

⁴ *Life of Defoe*, p. 134.

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clares in his preface to *Robinson Crusoe* that he believes the narrative to be "a just history of fact" and that as far as he can see, "there is no appearance of fiction in it." He rarely becomes enthusiastic; he takes sides with neither friend nor foe; he seems to say, "I give you the facts, judge for yourself," and as a result his extreme matter-of-factness makes us ashamed not to believe. Whenever, indeed, he uses some brief moral reflection on the action of a character, it is done in such a way as but to strengthen the idea that he is a mere narrator of the scene. Writing, not for fame, but for money, Defoe not infrequently presents as the real author some person who appears to be far more intimately acquainted with the subject than he himself. Thus in the *Journal of the Plague Year*, he assumes the character of an honest London shopkeeper; in the *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, the wars are described by a young soldier who took part in them.

Defoe, a born journalist, had a way of feeling the public pulse, and finding what new sensation the people desired, and then he produced the sensation with a vengeance. Among a nervous people, such a man's power would be dangerous in times of great excitement or impending catastrophe. The *Journal of the Plague Year* was published at a time when England was hearing with terror that the ancient disease had once more broken out in France; and Defoe handled the theme with such vividness and such merciless precision and detail that those who read it could not but have gained additional terror. So realistic was this story that for many years its authenticity was not doubted, while to

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this day numerous libraries place the volume in the department of history.

Defoe's masterpiece, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) came into existence under similar influences. The sailor, Alexander Selkirk, told about in Cooke's *Voyage to the South Sea* (1712) and left on the lonely island of Juan Fernandez, had lived there four years and had been rescued by the same captain who had placed him there. Defoe saw his opportunity. Seizing upon this incident, and knowing the possibilities and profit in public curiosity, he wrote the most believable piece of fiction ever created. Inspect this masterly work. There is scarcely an event of any magnitude in the entire story. An Englishman is shipwrecked, and going about the necessary duties of a lone man, he passes by labor from the state of the primitive being who subsists upon the rough gifts of Nature, to the state of the civilized man who has founded a habitation and a home, and has made Nature his servant. It is a symbol of the progress of all humanity; its truth is not limited to one man or nation; its truth is universal. Defoe declared it an allegory of his own life and struggles. He had labored alone in the great metropolis; he had become a master, like Crusoe, through sore toil and bitter experience. But its allegorical meanings are far more general; Defoe wrote more greatly than he knew.

How does the book possess such power? The story goes for a while along the line of the ancient picaresque tales, with which the higher classes were becoming disgusted; after a few harum-scarum adventures, however, Crusoe settles down to tame goats and dry raisins.

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How, then, is the fascination produced? It is simply that same use of detail found so valuable by Defoe in his biographies. The minute descriptions make this deserted being live before us; we sympathize with him in his toil; and every little incident in his day's work becomes a matter of intense interest to us. Those trips on his raft from the shore to the shipwreck are adventures of breathless suspense; the capture of his goats and the gathering of his grapes are of gratifying importance to us; his building of a wall is a matter of grave concern; and that footprint on the sand—our hearts leap with terror as we hear of it! Only concentrated attention could make possible such a result. Defoe, therefore, wastes no energy on complexity of plot; its simplicity leaves him every mental power to be expended in making the *one* being live an absolutely convincing existence.

There is vivid character portrayal here, but practically no character development. So far as the story gives information, Robinson Crusoe is about the same man, except for a little more wisdom, when he leaves the island, as when he came. But then what a charming fellow he is! In our interest in his deeds most of us neglect to notice what a lovable man this lonely hero is shown to be. He is seemingly just a commonplace fellow, with a good deal of practical information; but it is the glorification of the commonplace that Defoe intends. He taught the English people, through their fellow-Englishman Crusoe, that patience, industry, steadiness were essentials of success, and that contented plodding in the station granted by Providence might produce astonishing results. It is the voice of the fru-

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gal and hard-working English middle class speaking through his book; and with this popular expression of their ideals were the additional charms of the travel book, the book of customs, the book of biography. Small wonder that the work has sold its millions of copies; small wonder that it bids fair to live until the end of time.

A writer who could make so vivid the common, daily rounds of an exiled man's life would have no difficulty in picturing the daily life of the individuals he saw hourly in the streets of London. Defoe followed his great success with such books as *Moll Flanders*, the tale of a female rogue, *Colonel Jack*, the story of a street urchin's degeneration and regeneration, *Captain Singleton*, the story of a man of adventures, and various other volumes of fictitious biography. These, too, possess interest. The scenes in *Moll Flanders* teem with rogues and thieves; "Captain Singleton's tour across Africa is as good reading as Stanley, and, to the uninitiated, it seems quite as true to fact."⁵ All are exceptional studies in sociology, and are of no small value to any student of the growth of civilization. But as fiction, they do not equal *Robinson Crusoe*. The events in the lives of all these figures are not closely and logically connected; but Crusoe's day evolves from the previous day; the work of this moment is the result of yesterday's experience.

It has been claimed that Defoe, like Richardson, wrote for moral purposes. It is exceedingly doubtful. Most of his work is modeled on the rogue story; he describes the most depraved conditions—without enthusi-

⁵ Cross: *Development of the English Novel*, p. 29.

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asm, it is true, but also without sparing refined nerves. Moll Flanders is a wretch devoid of conscience, and Defoe tells about her affairs in a manner that shows some lack of conscience in himself. *Roxana* is in part downright corrupt. Portions of the *Journal of the Plague Year* and *Colonel Jack* are about as bad. And yet Defoe himself declares that from such works "just and religious inference is drawn." Only in *Crusoe* does he rise to a moral level far above his age.

In what things does his masterpiece lack the complete nature of a novel? It has plot; it has numerous interesting deeds and a fascinating hero; but it lacks the clash of human wills. Man's spiritual evolution is not emphasized; man's conflict with the world of other men does not enter. The great theme of man's love for woman is absent. It is a "memoir," an "imagined biography" of *one* man; it does not show the psychological effect of those soul crises that come into every man's life. It is more truly a tale of man's physical progress than of his spiritual evolution. As the story of an individual, however, it is a masterpiece.

JONATHAN SWIFT

Fifteen years before the appearance of *Robinson Crusoe* that human viper, Jonathan Swift, had chosen to display his satirical powers in two narratives, the *Tale of a Tub* and the *Battle of the Books*; after about a quarter of a century spent in lashing men and their follies with his deadly invectives, he heaped up his contempt, scorn, disgust, and insult for all humanity in his *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). He assumed contempt for Defoe, whose masterpiece had appeared seven years

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earlier, and purposely spoke of him as "that fellow What's His Name"; and yet, in the forms of the two writers' chief books there is considerable similarity. Both appealed to the travel instinct in the popular reader; both told the story of *one* man's experiences; both used the love theme but sparingly or not at all; both relied upon superabundant details for realism; both showed little or none of the soul growth that we expect in the novel of to-day; both showed a surprising knowledge of the universal traits in man.

Swift was a bundle of contradictions. Good-hearted in many ways, possessing genuine sympathy for the oppressed, generous with his small means, appreciative of the best in literature, he was, nevertheless, a poisonous misanthrope rankling with proud rage. His education had been furnished through the charity of relatives, and he hated them for it. Working for William Temple, who was in most things considerate enough, he allowed his soul to become embittered with the idea of servitude. He took no part in the vices of the day, and preferred the company of refined people; yet, in his writings he found joy in inserting filth and depravity. He would have fought to the last ditch for a friend; but he declared he had only forty-four in all the world, and trusted only seventeen of these. A man of generous impulses, he was born in an evil age, and the hypocrisy, cruelty, and unshamed vice of his times soured his soul. His early *Tale of a Tub*, a satire dealing with English, Non-conformist, and Catholic Churches (Martin, Jack, and Peter) was a prophecy of what his future work was to be; for in this he found very evident pleasure in lambasting the theories, dis-

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tinctions, and follies of the various creeds of England. This tirade showed what he could do if given a theme that moved his soul to its depths. That theme appeared in time as the whole genus *mankind*. Literary ambition had no part in that huge insult to humanity; it was written to relieve his overcharged heart. The first publisher stated that he found *The Travels of Lemuel Gulliver* left at his door in the darkness of the night, and for some time he could not discover its author. And yet, the genius and art displayed in it might have been a source of pride to any master of literature. Its success was immediate and tremendous; everybody wanted it; the price of the first edition was raised before the second was issued, but the sale continued unabated. Readers who cared little for politics read it for its story; others who understood its satirical import read it with additional pleasure; some who perceived in it mockery of their own rank, creed, or folly, writhed under it.

As Swift progressed in this work, he gained poison in his invective and sweep in his vision. Many interpretations of the various portions have been offered, but we might read into them the following meanings: in the first book, dealing with the land of Lilliput, we see how small we might look in the eyes of the Great Ruler; the second shows how small we ourselves should feel if brought into His presence; the third, describing the floating island inhabited by learned cranks, displays the presumption and vanity of petty human intellect; while the last heaps insult upon man universal by describing a land where horses and asses are the masters and man a despised beast of burden. "Vanity, vanity,

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all is vanity,"—this is the text of Swift's stormy ravings, and in his anger he pummels pride wherever he thinks he discovers it.

The mercilessness of the satire in the first three parts and the brutality of the descriptions in the last portion are almost incredible. After his visit to the land of the Yahoos, where he has seen man scorned by the horse and the ass, the very sight of humanity is nauseating. "I am not in the least provoked at the sight of a lawyer, a pickpocket, a colonel, a fool, a lord, a gamester, a politician, a physician, an evidence, . . . an attorney, a traitor, or the like; this is all according to the due course of things; but when I behold a lump of deformity and diseases, both in body and mind, smitten with pride, it immediately breaks all the measures of my patience; neither shall I ever be able to comprehend how such an animal, and such a vice, could tally together." Again: "My wife and family received me with great surprise and joy, because they had concluded me certainly dead; but I must freely confess the sight of them filled me only with hatred, disgust, and contempt; and the more by reflecting on the near alliance I had to them. . . . As soon as I entered the house my wife took me in her arms and kissed me; at which, having not been used to the touch of that odious animal for so many years, I fell into a swoon for almost an hour. At the time I am writing, it is five years since my last return to England: during the first year I could not endure my wife or children in my presence; the very smell of them was intolerable, much less could I suffer them to eat in the same room."

In Lilliput Land we see our petty political and re-

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ligious schemes through the wrong end of the telescope. The bitterness of the Catholics and the Protestants, as shown by the "Big-endians" and the "Small-endians," and the strivings of the Tories and Whigs as the "High-Heels" and the "Low-Heels," are among the keenest pieces of ridicule in all the world's literature. In the Land of Brobdingnag we see our sins and follies through the right end of the telescope, and whether we take the giants to be ourselves magnified, or as creatures of larger mold and character looking down upon our shriveled figures and souls, the sarcasm never relaxes. When Gulliver described England to the king of these giants, that monarch was moved to exclaim: "It was only a heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishments, the very worst effects that avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice, and ambition could produce. . . . My little friend, Grildrig, you have made a most admirable panegyric upon your country; you have clearly proved that ignorance, idleness and vice are the proper ingredients for qualifying legislators; that laws are best explained, interpreted, and supplied by those whose interests and abilities lie in perverting, confounding and eluding them. . . . I can not but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth."

Lest the educated should think themselves free from the feebleness of mankind, Swift devotes that clever third book to them. In the Island of Laputa, we come upon philosophers extracting sunbeams from cucumbers, softening marble for pillows and pincushions, and

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undertaking other unnecessary and profitless, but highly "scientific" tasks. And it may be noted here that such schemes were no worse than some actually advertised in Swift's own time. An enterprise was indeed advertised to "import jackasses from Spain"—as though England had not enough of its own. Only in our journey to the land of Houyhnhnm do we find the satire overreaching itself. This can not be a true picture of mankind; the spite is too evident. We are now reading the ravings of a depraved and almost maddened intellect. The disgusting lowness of the human beings in this land might apply to certain individuals of the eighteenth century; but man as a whole has never sunk so deep, and never will sink to such a plane. It is the perception of only the beast in humanity.

As has been pointed out, Swift was happy in his choice of form for this satire. The old travel story, so familiar to English readers, allowed a free use of marvels, monsters, and detailed, circumstantial statements of scenes not to be contradicted by an ignorant stay-at-home public. Then, too, Swift's apparent accuracy makes the whole affair seem real. He tells us just when he sailed; he states just where he was wrecked; each proportion in either dwarf land or giant land is seemingly a true one. Only in the Land of Houyhnhnms do we perceive the impossible. Horses are not physically constructed to build, eat, and live as there described.

Addison and Steele had impressed the importance of character portrayal in fiction; Defoe had shown the strength of a realistic series of events centered about

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one individual; Swift had done the same thing, had added wit and humor, and had pointed out the power of fiction in dealing with the follies, affectations, and vices of mankind. Another step, and the novel, as we understand it to-day, would be created.

ELIZA HAYWOOD

That step was almost taken by a woman, Mrs. Eliza Haywood (d. 1756), a disciple of Mrs. Manley, of the previous century, and a forerunner of Frances Burney, whose *Evelina* was a source of inspiration to Jane Austen. Pope gave the woman lasting fame in his *Dunciad*:

See in the circle next Eliza placed,
Two babes of love close clinging to her waist;
Fair as before her works she stands confessed,
In flowers and pearls by bounteous Kirkall dressed.

As a follower of Mrs. Manley and Mrs. Behn she is not at all squeamish about moral filth; but she understands to some degree what Defoe and Swift seemed not to comprehend, the psychology of love, and, though the love described is often little more than beastly passion, she makes some use of its effects and its ability to create a clash of wills in such works as her *British Recluse* (1722), *Idalia* (1723), *Memoirs of a Certain Island Adjacent to Utopia* (1725), *Secret Intrigues of the Count of Caramania* (1727), and a host of other stories of less scope, such as *Love in Excess*, *The Injured Husband*, and the *Fortunate Foundling*.

It was not, however, until 1751, after Richardson had written two books fulfilling our conception of a true

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novel, and Fielding had created one of the world's masterpieces in fiction, that Mrs. Haywood gained her first real triumph in literature. *Miss Betsy Thoughtless* is the first domestic novel in the English language, the first to find its field in home life, the first to point out the themes which Jane Austen afterwards handled in such a masterly manner. Many portions of this story are decidedly clever. Betsy Thoughtless, because of her scatter-brain nature, is constantly falling into troubles. She is flattered by numerous lovers, but loses the only one she cares for, Mr. Trueworth, because of her impatience and imprudence. An orphan at fifteen, she goes to London and lives in the home of her guardian, Mr. Goodman, a wealthy merchant who has married a hypocritical young widow. The widow's daughter, Flora, is caught in an intrigue by Betsy, who peeps through a crack in the bedroom wall, and thus gains her first lesson in vice. She now meets her former schoolmate, Miss Forward, who has lost her virtue, and by association with this woman, Betsy loses all of Trueworth's regard. Flora, indeed, has written anonymous letters to him about her, and he, in disgust, marries another woman. Mrs. Goodman has an intrigue with a former lover, Marplus, who has her bond for large amounts. At length her husband, responsible for his wife's contracts, is arrested for this debt, and dies from the shock and the disgrace. Betsy has meanwhile moved to private lodgings, and there meets a valet who assumes to be a knight, and with him she goes through a sham marriage. From this predicament she is rescued by Trueworth. She now marries, and her husband proves a rascal; but this discipline makes her a woman of self-

control and quiet manner. She is now persecuted with the libertine advances of a nobleman; she leaves home because of her husband's intrigues with a French woman. Now the husband falls sick, and she faithfully nurses him until his death. Then Truworth's wife very kindly dies, and of course the natural thing happens.

“ ‘Oh! have I lived to see you thus,’ cried he, ‘thus ravishingly kind!’ ‘And have I lived,’ rejoined she, ‘to receive these proofs of affection from the best and most ill used of men? Oh! Truworth! Truworth!’ added she, ‘I have not merited this from you.’ ‘You merit all things,’ said he; ‘let us talk no more of what is past, but tell me that you now are mine; I came to make you so by the irrevocable ties of love and law, and we must now part no more! Speak, my angel, my first, my last charmer!’ continued he perceiving she was silent, blushed, and hung down her head. ‘Let those dear lips confirm my happiness and say the time is come, that you will be all mine.’ . . . ‘You know you have my heart,’ cried she, ‘and cannot doubt my hand.’ ”

Here is an excellent plot; here, too, are characters decidedly real, but the same low view of love so evident in the previous century, is once more portrayed; men and women have no spiritual relations; every woman too easily falls a victim to temptation; every man is represented as at all times on the verge of the beastly. There is, however, one redeeming trait: the scoundrels lose the game and the virtuous win it. There is much nonsense, much hypocrisy, much downright vice; but still it marks some healthful tendencies in the eight-

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eenth century. For example, we find this commentary on duelling: "Mr. Truworth could not help joining with the ladies in condemning the folly of that custom which, contrary to the known laws of the land, and oftentimes contrary to his own reason, too, obliges the gentleman either to obey the call of the person who challenges him to the field, or, by refusing, submit himself, not only to all the insults his adversary is pleased to treat him with, but also be branded with the infamous character of a coward by all that know him."

This, then, is a full-fledged novel; but remember that it came eleven years after Richardson had shown the English people the true scope and significance of the new type of literature. Mrs. Haywood was but one of the many who learned their art from the fat, bashful, tea-drinking, effeminate publisher of London.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON

"Oh, Richardson!" cries Diderot, "thou shalt rest in the same class with Moses, Homer, Euripides and Sophocles, to be read alternately." Never, perhaps, in all literary history, has another man sprung into such immediate and high fame as had this London bookseller. Never before had a writer been so lionized, so deluged with tearful letters, so praised, so worshiped by sentimental women, and so sneered at by men of coarser fiber.

Born in Derbyshire in 1689, he was as a child abnormally prudent and unnaturally good. His school-mates called him Mr. Gravity, but liked him for his stories; as an apprentice, he bought his own candles in order that his master might not suffer loss by his night

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study; at the age of ten he wrote a long letter to a widow of fifty rebuking her for her frivolity. A sort of English Ben Franklin, he possessed, however, far more sentimentality. A man who preferred the society of women, he possessed a masculine business ability, and by his fiftieth year he was one of the most important printers in England, and Master of the Stationers' Company. Undoubtedly a virtuous soul, he nevertheless lacked the iron strength of such a man as Scott or of such a woman as George Eliot.

It was in 1739 that the publishers, Rivington and Osborne, urged this seemingly commonplace, uninspired, retiring gentleman to write "a book of familiar letters on the useful concerns of common life." In his business-like way Richardson at once went to work at the task and had composed several of the letters when the idea occurred to him to put a plot into the collection—"not the pomp and parade of romance writing," but something that might tend to promote the cause of religion and virtue. Choosing a story he had once heard of the marriage of a common girl to a nobleman, he brought forth in 1740 the first English novel complete in every essential—*Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. What a furor it raised! Here was something new under the sun. Young, the author of the *Night Thoughts*, called him an instrument of Providence; preachers praised him from the pulpit; ladies hid themselves in the parks to get a glimpse of him. It is said on the authority of Sir John Herschel that when a blacksmith read the book to the village neighbors collected in his shop, and they found at the close that Pamela had married her master, they shouted in their happiness, forced the sex-

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ton to open the church door, and rang the bell for joy.

What is the substance of the work that could so affect the high and the low of several nations? The gist of the whole plot is simply this: Pamela, a servant girl, is tempted, threatened, and mistreated by her young master, whose mother, on her death-bed, had commended Pamela to his services; but the young girl, through all the harassing circumstances, retains her virtue, and at length, seeing the opportunity for a splendid match, "angles" with the young squire, as Gosse puts it, and "lands him at last, like an exhausted salmon." All this is in the form of letters to and from her parents, with every detail of the incidents, every phase of the emotions, every thought, fear, and hope of the heroine recorded and analyzed. To many modern readers this leisurely business might be little short of maddening, but Samuel Johnson's reply to Erskine on this very subject may well be offered in defense: "Why, sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself; but you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment."

Doubtless Richardson thought he was writing an exceedingly moral book. He declared that it could be read "without raising a single idea throughout the whole that shall shock the exactest purity." And yet, to the reader of our time, many portions of the novel seem dangerously suggestive. Pamela's endeavors in the earlier chapters are strictly defensive; but when she begins to "fish" for the passionate young squire, schem-

ing prudence takes the place of a genuine regard for virtue, and she no longer holds our sympathy. Then, too, the unbridled passion of her lover might indeed shock the exactest purity, and yet, this rascal gets all the sweets and not the least punishment. But readers of the eighteenth century could scarcely be made any worse, and doubtless could be made better by the perusal of such a story. The dangers Pamela experienced would not have been surprising to her contemporaries, while her steady resistance not only may have been surprising, but may have aroused the quite unusual ambition to live a similar life of virtue.

In spite of these moral defects, the book sounds decidedly natural. Pamela's letters especially possess this quality. Truly the story is without "the pomp and parade of romance writing," but is something far better—a picture from real life. Long years of observation of woman's nature had made Richardson master of its secret workings. As a mere boy he had written many a love-letter for the village girls; as a man he had many women associates. They gathered at his home and called him "papa." He knew, therefore, exactly what sentiments were strongest in them, what emotions produced other emotions. He made the analysis of the soul no longer a matter of guess work, but a scientific method based on close personal investigation.

In 1741 Richardson published in two volumes a sequel to *Pamela*, in which the wife is shown in sorrow because of the squire's infidelity. This, however, seems not to have attracted a wide notice, and seven years passed before his second triumph appeared. *Clarissa Harlowe*, issued in seven volumes in 1748, is a master-

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piece. Alfred de Musset declares it the best novel in the world. Fielding's sister wrote: "I am overwhelmed; my only vent is tears." Colley Cibber, when he heard that the villain would bring Clarissa to die miserably, wrote Richardson: "God damn him if she should!" Such expressions but prove that the heroine is a living personage. Here, indeed, is the modern subtle analysis of the heart. Psychology, not mere incident, is the source of interest; not the deed, but the motive back of the deed and the resulting relationship with the next deed, the temptations and defenses of human nature, the failures and the remorse, the sustaining power of ideals, the conflict of the two influences, the animal and the spiritual, forever striving in each individual—these are elements that make the characters of *Clarissa Harlowe* living beings and give them the power to do that which few early fictitious personages could do—the power to arouse us to pity, hatred, disgust, sympathy, a multitude of varied emotions. The beings here portrayed become our acquaintances, as real as those about us, and we are constrained to agree with Diderot when he says: "At the close of the work I seemed to remain deserted."

In this story, instead of conquering and winning the passionate lover, the heroine becomes a martyr to the man's licentiousness. By the aid of the villain, Lovelace, Clarissa runs away from her tyrannical parents, and after being vainly tempted by this lover, she is taken to a low haunt, drugged, and debauched. Lovelace, now touched by some remorse, offers to marry her; but she refuses and dies, partly from the result of her rough treatment, but more from shame and anguish.

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There is a certain inevitableness about this work never before seen in English literature outside the drama. The ending is bitter and cruel; but it is the *one* ending, the necessary outcome of a group of fatally associated events. Prolix the book may be—in early editions Clarissa's will covers nineteen closely printed pages—but the dramatic atmosphere and the pathos resulting from a masterly picture of a clash of wills and the undeserved defeat of one of these wills, cause us to forgive the length. The ending seems merciless; but, then, many catastrophies in real life are apparently so. Our sense of justice is somewhat satisfied by Lovelace's death in a duel resulting from the crime; but every reader must feel that here wickedness crushes the innocent. We can not wonder that a lady wrote Richardson that if Clarissa came to a bad end, "may the hatred of all the young, beautiful and virtuous forever be your portion! And may your eyes never behold anything but age and deformity! May you meet with applause only from envious old maids, surly bachelors and tyrannical parents! May you be doomed to the company of such, and after death may their ugly souls haunt you!"

Thus, in his second plot, closely woven and centering always about the heroine, this first master of the novel created a work to some extent rivaling the *Othello* of the great master of the drama in the subtlety of its villainy, the gradual weakening of the will-power, and a certain high fatalism. The book was quickly translated into the French, German, and Dutch; its influence is discernible in almost every modern literature of western Europe.

In a letter of 1756 Richardson wrote: "I am teased

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by a dozen ladies of note and virtue to give them a good man, as they say I have been partial to their sex and unkind to my own." His next attempt in fiction, therefore, was to picture an ideal gentleman, and the result was that cad, Sir Charles Grandison. This monster of gentility made his graceful and highly polite bow to the public in 1754, some time after both Fielding and Smollett had shown England some very real but not exactly ideal heroes. Sir Charles "acts uniformly well through a variety of trying scenes because all his actions are regulated by one steady principle"; his "damnable iteration" of polite goodness is one of the most exasperating traits (to a man reader) in all literature. Tuckerman sums it up well when he says: "He can afford to be generous because he is rich; he can afford to decline a duel because his reputation for skill in swordsmanship is so well established that he runs no danger of being called a coward; he is free from licentiousness because his passions are under perfect control."⁶

Again the ladies waxed enthusiastic. The book had an enormous sale; unmarried women looked about for young Grandisons; the married wondered why their husbands were not more like this insipid being. So far as we may gather from the writings of the day, we judge that the hero was rather amusing to male readers of the period. Perhaps, also, he was a source of some curiosity—he was so utterly different from the actual gentleman of the day that he must have been exceedingly interesting, just as some newly discovered animal would now be. Note but this specimen from the work:

⁶ *History of English Prose Fiction*, p. 197.

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“He met me, and taking my not-withdrawn hand and peering in my face, ‘Mercy,’ said he, ‘the same kind aspect! the same sweet and obliging countenance! How can this be? But you *must* be gracious! you *will*! Say you will.’

“‘You must not urge me, Sir Rowland. You will give me pain if you lay me under the necessity to repeat—’

“‘Repeat what? Don’t say a refusal. Dear madam, don’t say a refusal! Will you not save a life? Why, madam, my poor boy is absolutely and *bona fide* broken-hearted. I would have had him come with me; but no, he could not bear to leave the beloved of his soul! . . . Come, come, be gracious! be merciful. Dear lady, be as good as you look to be. One word of comfort for my poor boy; I could kneel to you for one word of comfort—nay, I *will* kneel’;—taking hold of my other hand as he still held one; and down on his knees dropped the honest knight.”

Grandison has what Dickens calls “a clean-cravated formality of manner and a kitchen-pokerness of carriage.” Clearly, Richardson, who knew English middle life so well, knew almost nothing of aristocratic circles. How ridiculous is the proposal of Sir Charles!

“In a soothing, tender and respectful manner he put his arm around me, and taking my own handkerchief unresisted wiped away the tears as they fell on my cheek. ‘Sweet humanity! charming sensibility! Check not the kindly gush. Dew-drops of Heaven! (wiping away my tears, and kissing the handkerchief) dew-drops of Heaven, from a mind like that Heaven, mild and gracious.’

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“He kissed my hand with fervour; dropped down on one knee; again kissed it. ‘You have laid me, madam, under everlasting obligations; and will you permit me before I rise, loveliest of women, will you permit me to beg an early day?’

“He clasped me in his arms with an ardour that displeased me not, on reflection; but at the time startled me. He then thanked me again on one knee. I held out the hand he had not in his with intent to raise him; for I could not speak. He received it as a token of favour, kissed it with ardour; arose, *again* pressed my cheek with his lips.”

Yet the book has some great pages. Lady Clementina’s madness over Sir Charles is a vivid and touching episode, while the mock marriage of the future wife of Sir Charles is a powerful scene, entirely worthy of Scott or Dickens. Say what we may against the hero himself, we are compelled to admire the subtle analysis found here as in the other volumes by Richardson. Indeed, this appreciation of the moods of the human soul is so keen and so unabating that the reading of this author’s three books is rather wearing on the nerves. They are long, and they demand and obtain the closest attention to details. Every little emotion is stressed; its influence may turn out to be the great motive of the main deed in the book. It is the sort of work which Jane Austen could do, but which was beyond Scott; the kind which Hawthorne mastered, but which was beyond the ability of Cooper. The way in which Richardson expresses himself does not seem extraordinary; perhaps its chief excellence is that it calls no attention to itself. In his first novel, at least, he lacks the

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sense of proportion; he is almost devoid of humor, he is leisurely to exasperation. But the power is there, nevertheless, and its source lies in an intimate knowledge of the moods, sentiments, and motives that move mankind, and in the ability to apply these in a realistic and logical manner to a group of vividly portrayed beings.

His contributions to the progress of English fiction are, therefore, very clear. He brought to it not only *real* life, but *contemporary* life; he emphasized states of mind rather than deeds; he greatly advanced the use of conversation as a means of delineating character; he pointed out the value of details; of all writers of fiction up to his time he made the most fruitful use of analysis of emotions. What is perhaps of more importance, he inspired the man who was long considered the first genuine master of fiction—Henry Fielding.

HENRY FIELDING

Henry Fielding (1707–1754) lawyer, dramatist, novelist, zealous officer, and prince of good fellows in his day, was born in Somersetshire, was educated at Eton and Leyden, and was in London by his twenty-first year trying to make a living by his pen or by any other means that came handy. An enormous fellow with a fine set of nerves, he possessed an immense capacity for enjoyment, and whether his satires or plays succeeded, or whether not a penny jingled in his pocket, he secured about all the pleasure that any one moment could produce. In all, he wrote twenty-eight plays, some of which—such as *Tom Thumb the Great* (1730), and the *Historical Register* (1737)—had considerable

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success. Fielding was, however, a man who had no prudence in financial matters, and, his constant lack of money driving him into a renewed effort to learn law, he was admitted to the bar in that momentous year of his life, 1740. This was the very year in which Richardson's *Pamela* set the ladies to weeping, and some of the gentlemen to laughing. Fielding was one of those who laughed. The whole thing seemed to him so ridiculous that he at once determined to write a burlesque on the story.

Joseph Andrews appeared in 1742. Choosing Joseph, the brother of Pamela as the hero, Fielding has him tempted by a passionate widow, just as Pamela was tempted by the young squire. Invitingly ridiculous as this idea was, Fielding soon became so interested in his young hero, and in the strongly human soul, Parson Adams, that after the first five chapters he almost deserted the idea of burlesque, and wrought a piece of work rarely excelled in its firm grip upon the traits of human nature and in its sharp delineation of characters. Fielding declares that he took Cervantes as his model; but *Don Quixote* is a book of types, while this is a collection of distinctly individualized beings. The plot perhaps is not in all points admirable. It seems to consist of a series of parallel events or subplots, rather hastily brought to some semblance of union near the close of the book; but nevertheless the business moves right on, and whatever interruptions exist are so excellent that we gladly forgive them for temporarily stopping the current. It is splendid masculine comedy, and breathes a freedom and breadth unknown to Richardson's hothouse productions.

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The difference between the two men's experiences and view-points is at once recognized. Richardson was acquainted with women and a world of feminine emotions; Fielding with men and a world of masculine activities. Moreover, Fielding knew the dramatic in life; he had been a successful play-writer; he had what Richardson hardly possessed in any degree—a sense of humor; he saw the follies of men, but unlike Richardson he seems to have had no desire to set up a rigid code for other people's morals. He was charitable enough to forgive some of the petty sins that Richardson considered signs of dangerous depravity. Richardson knew thoroughly the middle class only; Fielding knew all classes. Lady Mary Montagu was his cousin; his second wife was a woman from the lower ranks, his children's nurse. He was born of a well-to-do aristocratic family, but he drank and quarreled with thugs of the sponging house. As an officer of the law he looked into dens of vice, courts, prisons, a multitude of places. He possessed, therefore, a breadth of vision utterly impossible to Richardson. The little fat book-printer, moreover, was never in the best of health, and often complained of his nerves; Fielding was a healthy animal, and never knew he had nerves until near the day of his death. The result is that his books are full of healthy animal activity. Coarse he undoubtedly is; but remember he is describing his own day, and, describing real life, just as Charles Dickens did for the nineteenth century, he could not paint the ugly beautiful. We should bear in mind also that it is not frankness, but *suggestiveness* that is dangerous. The sight of an absolutely nude figure might be disgusting; one draped

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in gauze might rouse all the latent beast in an observer. In the long run the essentially good wins here, just as surely as in Richardson's work; but the "sissy" stands no chance. Parson Adams and Tom Jones are at heart good men, but decidedly bad fellows in a fight. They would have suffocated in Richardson's novels.

When, therefore, *Joseph Andrews* appeared, the more discriminating readers of the day at once realized that here was a book closer to the truth of human nature and life in general than the experiences and emotions of Pamela, who had caused so many tears two or three years earlier. Joseph Andrews is of course supposed to be the hero; but, beside the huge figure of the plain-spoken and big-fisted Parson Adams, he is dwarfed and overshadowed. The parson is one of the immortal figures of fiction. In his lovable eccentricities, his forgetfulness, his independence, his fearlessness, his thorough contempt for hypocrisy, his mercifulness, his unbounded generosity, and his blunt common sense, he is human from head to foot, and must be given a place in the first rank of vividly delineated figures in the world of fiction. Joseph Andrews is as sentimental and ridiculous as his sister Pamela, and Richardson evermore hated Fielding for the picture. Mrs. Slipslop, the pig-gish Parson Trulliber, and some of the other personages seem almost caricatures, instead of characters; but they give us a view of the sordid conditions of the eighteenth century just as credible as that presented by Richardson.

Fortune was now smiling upon the burly author. In 1743, while the wave of popularity was still high, he collected three volumes of his miscellaneous writings,

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and here we find some pieces now unjustly neglected, but in their day the source of wide-spread entertainment. The second volume contains the now laughable, now bitter *Journey from this World to the Next*, one of the most ludicrous episodes in which is the flight of a number of ghosts when the spirit of a man who had recently died of smallpox tries to enter their company. In the third volume we come across that cold-blooded, cynical, cruelly polite satire entitled *Jonathan Wild, the Great*. Seldom has literature been more caustic than this. Bowing most courteously, Fielding leads his villain with mock deference from the cradle, through a life of crime, to the gallows. The irony is so continuous, so calm, so merciless that the reader is liable to become angry; in Fielding's day it must have been a maddening rebuke to many a young London buck who swaggered through the streets glorying in his prowess as a criminal.

From 1743 to 1748 little was known of Fielding. Seemingly he was financially and physically in ill health. Even before middle life he was suffering from the results of overestimation of his strength to endure riotous excess. In 1748 he was made a Justice of the Peace for Westminster, and, familiar as he was with all forms of crime, he was a valuable officer and a power for reform. It was amidst the arduous and dangerous duties of such a work that he finished in 1749 that masterpiece, *Tom Jones*.

Coleridge has declared, in his *Table Talks* that *Œdipus Tyrannus*, *The Alchemist*, and *Tom Jones* are the three most perfect plots ever invented. Leisurely as the tale appears, innumerable as are the digressions, the

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book is scarcely matched in all literature in its inevitable leading to the final dénouement. It is doubtful whether Fielding always surpassed his predecessors—Defoe and Richardson, for instance—in character portrayal; but never before in English prose had been seen such complexity or intricacy of plot. In *Joseph Andrews* Fielding had sometimes sacrificed the characters to the incidents; but here they balance, they mingle, they develop out of each other, they seem thoroughly natural and in unison. The incidents seem the logical results of the characters' natures; the natures of the characters are made evident by means of the incidents. Fielding is the first English writer to combine in a convincing manner every characteristic we now look for in the novel.

He felt that he was producing a new type of literature. He knew not what name to give it; but he attempted consciously to create what he called a "prose epic" and declared that his work contained every essential of the true epic except the meter. Years later Lord Byron whole-heartedly endorsed his view, and dubbed him "the prose Homer of human nature." The human nature described, as in *Joseph Andrews*, is again rather coarse; but the same excuse may again be urged; and moreover his own words may be repeated in his defense: "The vices to be found here are rather the accidental consequences of some human frailty or foible than causes habitually existing in the mind."

The plot is too large to be even outlined here. Tom Jones, supposed to be a foundling, is reared in the home of Squire Allworthy, is plagued by a young hypocrite, Blifil, is in love with Sophia Western, almost loses her

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by the many adventures his passionate blood leads him into, is at length proved not to be a foundling, and secures Sophia. As Gosse⁷ says, this is the healthiest company ever devised by a human brain. There are fights and sprees and passionate embraces and coarse talk and rowdyism beyond the power of the twentieth-century refined vocabulary. As in *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding has no use for a sneak or a hypocrite; but he can easily forgive the sins of hot youthful blood. He believes thoroughly in the old Irish adage: "Whenever thou seest a bare pate, for the love of God, crack it!" and rich red British blood flows by the gallon. Molly Seagrim appears at church in unusual finery; offensive remarks are heard; a quarrel results, and lo! a glorious Anglo-Saxon fight.

"As a vast herd of cows in a rich farmer's yard, if, while they are milked, they hear their calves at a distance, lamenting the robbery which is then committing, roar and bellow; so roared forth the Somersetshire mob an halloloo, made up of almost as many squalls, screams, and other different sounds, as there were persons, or indeed passions, among them. Some were inspired by rage, others alarmed by fear, and others had nothing in their heads but the love of fun; but chiefly Envy, the sister of Satan and his constant companion, rushed among the crowd and blew up the fury of the women; who no sooner came up to Molly than they pelted her with dirt and rubbish.

"Molly, having endeavored in vain to make a handsome retreat, faced about; and laying hold of ragged Bess, who advanced in front of the enemy, she at one

⁷ *Eighteenth Century Literature*, p. 255.

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blow felled her to the ground. The whole army of the enemy (though near a hundred in number), seeing the fate of their general, gave back many paces, and retired beyond a new-dug grave; for the church-yard was the field of battle, where there was to be a funeral that very evening. Molly pursued her victory, and catching up a skull which lay on the side of the grave, discharged it with such fury, that having hit a tailor on the head, the two skulls sent equally forth a hollow sound at their meeting, and the tailor took presently measure of his length on the ground, where the skulls lay side by side, and it was doubtful which was the more valuable of the two. Molly, then taking a thigh-bone in her hand, fell in among the flying ranks, and dealing her blows with great liberality on either side, overthrew the carcass of many a mighty hero and heroine. Recount, O muse, the names of those who fell on this fatal day. First Jemmy Tweedle felt on his hinder head the direful bone. Him the pleasant banks of sweetly winding Stour had nourished, where he first learnt the vocal art, with which, wandering up and down at wakes and fairs, he cheered the rural nymphs and swains, when upon the green they interweaved the sprightly dance; while he himself stood fiddling and jumping to his own music. How little now avails his fiddle! He thumps the verdant floor with his carcass. Next old Echepole, the sow-gelder, received a blow in his forehead from our Amazonian heroine, and immediately fell to the ground. He was a swinging fat fellow, and fell with almost as much noise as a house. His tobacco-box dropt at the same time from his pocket, which Molly took up as lawful spoil. Then Kate of

the Mill tumbled unfortunately over a tombstone, which catching hold of her ungartered stocking, inverted the order of nature, and gave her heels the superiority to her head. Betty Pippin, with young Roger, her lover, fell both to the ground; where, O Perverse Fate! she salutes the earth, and he the sky."

If the English world thought it had seen superbly vivid characterization in *Joseph Andrews*, it had reason to disabuse its mind when *Tom Jones* appeared. Parson Adams is a charming blending of traits; Parson Trulliber, feeding his swine instead of his flock, is an admirable piece of sordid realism; but no such figures as the stubborn, doggedly obstinate Squire Western, the amiable Squire Allworthy, the calculating Bliffl, and that full-blooded, harum-scarum hero, Tom Jones, had ever before been seen in English prose.

Concerning the character of Tom Jones, there has been much diversity of opinion. Thackeray says of him: "A hero with a flawed reputation; a hero sponging for a guinea; a hero who can't pay his landlady, and is obliged to let his honor out to hire, is absurd, and his claim to heroic rank untenable. I protest against Mr. Thomas Jones holding such rank at all. I protest against his being considered a more than ordinary young fellow, ruddy-cheeked, broad-shouldered, and fond of wine and pleasure. He would not rob a church, but that is all." The "learned" Miss Carter,⁸ of his own day, had a more charitable view: "He is no doubt an imperfect, but not a detestable character, with all that honesty, good nature and generosity." It is indeed a triumph of art that after Tom's numerous shameful fallings

⁸ *Carter and Talbot Correspondence*, Ed. Pennington.

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from grace we feel no deep disgust at his winning Sophia. Perhaps, after all, in spite of his weakness of will-power in the strife against the passions that *would* rise in his healthy frame, the largeness of his heart and the true generosity of his nature, together with the impositions and the petty tyranny of his hypocrite rival, Blifil, are the causes of our genuine satisfaction in his final triumph. Forty characters appear in this huge narrative; it is beyond our purposes to attempt a description of each, but whether a country squire or a philosophical loungeur, a rural wench or a town "lady," all live, for the time being, as truly as any whom we meet to-day.

In the midst of his fame Fielding was now reaping the bitter fruits of his misspent youthful energy. As an officer of the law he was attempting to lead a life of great activity, while at the same time suffering intensely. The effect of this decline is shown in his last novel, *Amelia*, appearing in 1751. It is almost a melancholy piece of work; the shadow of death seems to have been on the man as he wrote. The joy of animal activity is not depicted in it; but the sad results of sin and the hideous "other side" of vice is revealed with a hard, grim realism. A refined woman marries a gambling lieutenant. They sink together until the husband is confined in prison, there to remain in shame and remorse until that gentle angel, Dr. Harrison, rescues him and brings them both back to their fortune. Doubtless as Fielding wrote the closing lines he felt that he was not giving a true picture of the life of his day; otherwise he would have sent the husband into life banishment in some prison colony, and would have

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driven Amelia forth into the street to become a fallen wretch. But with that gentleness so characteristic of him, he perverted, for mercy's sake, the cold dictates of logic and art, and gave the couple that which gives the reader much more satisfaction.

In 1754 Fielding felt that the end of all, for him, was near at hand. That year he went to Lisbon, writing as he journeyed, his *Journal of the Voyage*, which is full of the irrepressible spirit which England had learned to expect of him. It was published in 1755, after the fertile mind had ceased its wonderfully creative work.

Fielding's contributions to the evolution of fiction are so numerous that we may simply enumerate a few of them without going into a discussion of each. He transferred to the novel several of the devices so long effective on the ancient and modern stage, such as the secret of a hero's birth and the *deus ex machina*. He cast aside the old idea used by Defoe of finding records or manuscripts from which to secure information; he refused to use Richardson's scheme of having letters from and to the characters as proof; he simply assumed that omnipresence now granted to any novelist who desires to use it. He dared to introduce his own personality by writing whole chapters of his views on nature, literature, art, life, what not; and this fact of personality, as Sidney Lanier has pointed out, is an extremely modern trait, a characteristic almost totally absent from the ancient classic literature. He introduced local color in such a way that we may follow his characters from town to town, and this is an undeniable aid in making these figures more living and more believable.

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He built a plot on a gigantic scale and held it together with a masterly grip. He set up for fiction a code of ethics which is still appreciated and believed—the code that innate goodness of *being* is a greater, more admirable trait in a hero than mere goodness of *doing*. Lastly, he created men and women so vital, virile, and mortal that they seem forevermore not like creatures of paper and type, but veritable bodies of flesh. He had that for which the prophets and saints of old prayed, not mere knowledge, not mere information, but *understanding*, and that abundantly.

In Fielding the eighteenth-century novel reached its greatest height; there now begins a steady decline until towards the close of the century when we shall find innumerable ambitious but incapable ladies and gentlemen of a literary turn struggling in a veritable slough of confusion and bewilderment.

SARAH FIELDING

This horde of minor novelists began to appear even in Fielding's own day. Perhaps the best of the earlier ones was his own sister, Sarah, whose *David Simple*, published in 1742, shows an admiration for Richardson not held by her brother, and shows also a certain care, compactness, and neatness of plot, and some keen analysis of character of which even the great Henry might not have been ashamed. But Sarah Fielding was overshadowed by the genius and the immense popularity not only of Richardson and of her brother, but of a new master, a queer, bitter fellow named Tobias Smollett (1721–1771).

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TOBIAS SMOLLETT

This man was true to his age. His roughness, coarseness, practical joking, brawls, abductions, plain filth must have been eminently satisfying to eighteenth-century readers. He came of an aristocratic family, was cared for by his uncle, a knight, in a beautiful section of Dumbartonshire, and with a good education went down to London in 1739. His play, *The Regicide*, was refused by Garrick, and, being in lack of money, he became a surgeon's mate in the English navy, and for some time led the rough life of a seaman. He lived in Jamaica, and is said to have married a woman of wealth; but in 1744 he once more appeared in London streets and led the Bohemian form of life so attractive to him. It was in 1748 that his first novel, *Roderick Random*, gained the applause of London literary circles. It was plain to all readers that this was a book born of experience, something almost in the form of a biography of its author. In fact, the Scotchman in the story goes through many of the experiences that came to Smollett himself. It was a tale that took both sea and land as its field, and naturally British readers were enthusiastic in their praise. As a ship surgeon he had become thoroughly acquainted with naval affairs and sea-dogs; as a struggling physician in London he had learned accurately the eccentricities of the city middle and lower classes; his work therefore possessed a breadth very novel to readers of his day.

Three years later (1751) Smollett followed his first success with a second, *Peregrine Pickle*, a book better written in some parts, with even more breadth, sweep,

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and humor, and certainly fully as coarse as the most licentious dandy of the eighteenth century could have desired. Two years later came *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, not so good a book, because, with all his coarseness and rough characters, its author endeavors to be romantic. The book was never highly popular even in his own time, and Smollett's egotism and pride were somewhat dashed by what he considered a lack of public appreciation of the "artistic." He had other causes, moreover, for being in a bad humor at this time. With a disposition always cynical, biting and highly sarcastic, he had offended many people by his observations, not only on human kind in general, but on noted Englishmen in particular, and at length, being arrested for libel, he found himself in jail in 1761. Here he employed his large leisure on a new novel, *Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1762), perhaps a better book than *Ferdinand*, at least more popular, but by no means equal to the earlier attempts.

Somewhat dismayed by the results of his venomous attacks on his enemies, and rather discouraged over his fall in popularity as a fiction-writer, he now turned to history writing, produced a book along this line that gained considerable fame and sale, but nearly ruined his impaired health in the work. He traveled in France and Italy in 1766, but his physical frame was constantly tormented by the hating and tempestuous spirit within, and, discontented with all he saw, he came back to England but little improved. The venom in the man had now been too long without a vent, and in 1769 it burst forth in his *Adventures of an Atom*, a volume positively disgusting in its maliciousness toward all

mankind. The man's body was by this time fearfully racked; another visit to the Continent was demanded. At Leghorn he came under the care of a physician who strove to cure his spirit as well as his body, and under this influence he produced his last and his least bitter story, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771), published shortly after his death.

As in Byron's poetry, there is a touch of the autobiographical in everything Smollett wrote. And like himself, his fiction is perverse, rough, now wildly humorous, now madly sullen. Envy, selfishness, the meanest attributes of man are lingered over. He delights in a "savage analysis of motive,"⁹ and in his bitterness refuses to see the sweetness and the charm of humanity. He is the Swift among novelists. His joy is a malicious exposition of malicious traits.

Roderick Random, *Peregrine Pickle* and *Humphrey Clinker* are filled with scenes and adventures that seem to be natural enough in themselves; but that they are always logical in their sequence is very doubtful. Smollett seems to have a habit of inserting a chapter because it is funny, and not because it aids in the progress of the story; while his undeniably brilliant work shows so much hatred that not infrequently his speeches and acts do not seem consistent. We must not, therefore, look to Smollett for that closeness or intricacy of plot found in Richardson and Fielding, but rather for a collection of adventures that *happened* to occur to some one person or group of persons.

The idea of justice seems to be entirely absent from this author's mental equipment. In *Roderick Random*

⁹ Cross: *Development of the English Novel*, p. 51.

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the hero, a wild scamp who does every deed but the right one, gains as his reward a beautiful, clean-souled girl; in the second novel, *Peregrine Pickle*, the same thing happens. Let us look briefly at the plot of this second work. Peregrine, whose mother has a violent aversion to him—and we can not blame her—is adopted by Commodore Trunnion, who, with one-legged Jack Hatchway and Tom Pipes, is occupying a ship-like home named the Garrison. The place has a ditch and a drawbridge; Jack and Tom must take their turns at being “on the watch”; all sleep in hammocks; time is reckoned by “bells” instead of hours; everything smacks of the sea. The Commodore, a confirmed bachelor, has a profound dread of being captured by some woman,—and well he may. For Peregrine’s Aunt Grizzle, a sour female with a cast in one eye, sets her other eye on the old sailor as a legitimate victim. She is aided by Hatchway and Pipes, who doubtless are growing tired of spending so many “bells” on the lookout. The Commodore, however, remains totally oblivious to any such appeals, until Pipes, climbing on the roof one night, lowers through the chimney a bunch of phosphorescent whittings, and yells through the speaking trumpet, “Trunnion! Trunnion! turn out and be spliced, or lie still and be damned.” The voice of the supernatural is not to be scorned, and the gruff old victim reluctantly consents to the marriage. Unfortunately, on the road to the church, the Commodore’s old fox-hunting horse runs away after the hounds, and the ceremony is postponed to a later day. At length, however, the two are “spliced” and return to the Garrison. Here they go to bed in a hammock, which soon breaks

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down under the double burden, and both hit the floor, much to Aunt Grizzle's disgust and anger. The next day furniture reforms take place that almost break the old fellow's heart.

Peregrine now goes off to school, falls in love with Amelia Gauntlet, and sends love verses to her by Pipes, who puts them in his shoe, and then finding them worn to pieces, writes some of his own as substitutes. The surprise of Miss Amelia at the poetic tributes resulting may be imagined; she and Peregrine are no longer on speaking terms. Peregrine goes to Oxford and finds later an opportunity to explain all to Amelia. His uncle now discovers the love affair, and he and Peregrine are separated for the time being. "I am informed as how you are in chase of a painted galley, which will decoy you upon the flats of destruction, unless you keep a better look out and a surer reckoning than you have hitherto done." Peregrine and Hatchway now quarrel over this matter and are about to have a duel, when Pipes interferes; later, however, Peregrine, "full of bloody execution," has one with Amelia's brother. The young rascal now goes abroad, comes back a moral wreck, vainly tempts the virtue of Amelia, and is called home by the dying Commodore. "Swab the spray from your bowsprit," cries the Commodore, "and coil up your spirits. You must not let the toplifts of your heart give way because you see me ready to go down at these years. . . . Here has been a doctor that wanted to stow me chock-full of physic, but when a man's hour is come, what signifies his taking his departure with a 'pothecary's shop in his hold? Those fellows come alongside of dying men, like the messen-

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gers of the Admiralty, with sailing orders; but I told him as how I could slip my cable without his direction or assistance, and so he hauled off in dudgeon."

Possessed now of a good portion of his uncle's money, Peregrine returns to London, drugs Amelia, and takes her to private lodgings. She, however, unlike Clarissa Harlowe, does not die, but gives him a scorching rebuke. Here the story is interrupted for the introduction of the *Memoirs of a Lady of Quality*, one of the most foully suggestive narratives in any literature. Peregrine having squandered his money, now tries writing for a livelihood, is put into the Fleet for libel, but is at length released by securing the necessary cash, and marries Amelia, who, now an heiress, quickly forgives the past. Peregrine's father dies and leaves him a fortune. The rascal gains all the material rewards of this life.

All this is mingled with riot, coarse joys, satire, pictures of blackguards and scoundrels, and ferocious stabs at humanity. Well may Taine say: "He flings together personages the most revolting with the most grotesque—a Lieutenant Lismahago, half-roasted by Red Indians; sea wolves who pass their lives in shouting and travestying all their ideas into a sea jargon; old maids as ugly as she-asses, as withered as skeletons, and as acrid as vinegar; maniacs steeped in pedantry, hypochondria, misanthropy and silence. . . . The public whom he addresses is on a level with his energy and roughness, and in order to shake such nerves a writer cannot strike too hard."¹⁰ Peregrine Pickle is as immoral as his predecessor, Roderick Random, and gains his ends through sheer brute force. Yet he and

¹⁰ *History of English Literature*, Vol. IV, p. 323.

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all the other characters are marvelously vivid and living beings. Lieutenant Jack Hatchway, Pipes and Commodore Trunnion, with Tom Bowling and Jack Rattlin in *Roderick Random*, are the forefathers of the long line of sea characters so frequently met with in English and American fiction, and fully deserve a place in the gallery of the immortals in literature. In spite of the disgust which we sometimes feel in reading, and in spite, too, of the seemingly careless throwing together of not necessarily connected short plots, we are carried on from page to page by the fine mingling of humor, seriousness, satire, and activity.

Humphrey Clinker, the product of a more sane and peaceful spirit, has a humor refreshingly free from the earlier bitterness. The story seems badly named, as Humphry is a Methodist postilion who joins the Brambles family in their wanderings, and is never at any time very prominent. He and other Methodists in the book are introduced as objects of ridicule. The real figures of importance are Matthew Brambles, in search of health, and Miss Tabitha Brambles, in search of a husband. There is an "aside" love plot between a niece, Lydia, and a mysterious stranger; but most of the story centers about the two figures first mentioned, and an ugly Scotchman, Lismahago. Miss Tabitha is a character never to be forgotten. "She is tall, raw-boned, awkward, flat-chested and stooping; her complexion is sallow and freckled; her eyes are not gray, but greenish like those of a cat, and generally inflamed; her hair is of a sandy or rather dusty hue; her forehead low; her nose long, sharp, and toward the extremity, always

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red in cool weather; her lips skinny; her mouth extensive; her teeth straggling and loose, of various colors and conformation; and her long neck shriveled into a thousand wrinkles." Her efforts to enchant the blunt, hard-headed Lismahago form some of the most ludicrous scenes in English fiction. Lismahago had been married once to an Indian squaw; Miss Tabitha's curiosity was aroused by his hints about this wild damsel.

"These observations served only to inflame her desire of knowing the particulars about which she had inquired; and with all his evasion he could not help discovering the following circumstances: that his princess had neither shoes, stockings, shift, nor any kind of linen; that her bridal dress consisted of a petticoat of red baize and a fringed blanket fastened about her shoulders with a copper skewer; but of ornaments she had great plenty. Her hair was curiously plaited and interwoven with bobbins of human bones; one eyelid was painted green, and the other yellow; the cheeks were blue, the lips white, the teeth red, and there was a black list drawn down the middle of the forehead as far as the tip of the nose; a couple of gaudy parrot's feathers were stuck through the divisions of the nostrils; there was a blue stone set in the chin; her earrings consisted of two pieces of hickory, of the size and shape of drumsticks; her arms and legs were adorned with bracelets of wampum; her breast glittered with numerous strings of glass beads; she wore a curious pouch or pocket of woven grass, elegantly painted with various colors; about her neck was hung the fresh scalp of a Mohawk warrior, whom her deceased lover had lately

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slain in battle; and finally, she was anointed from head to foot with bear's grease, which sent forth a most agreeable odor."

Much of the humor of Smollett would doubtless prove decidedly distasteful to the modern French; and yet many a touch of it came to him through their language from the Spanish. Both he and Fielding owed much to Cervantes and Le Sage, and the horse play and practical jokes of the English authors have a plentiful supply of parallels in their Spanish and French models. The streaks of wild exaggeration, the frequent satire against woman, the tendency to make some characters so ridiculous as almost to change them to caricatures are elements which Smollett received from the Continent, and which he handed on down to as late a writer as Dickens. Along with this farcical tendency goes a remarkable power in describing English scenes, and in depicting social conditions, prisons, and legal tortures in all that horror which the non-imaginative writings of the eighteenth century prove so sadly true. Not the slightest touch of brotherly love invades Smollett's work. Apparently the philanthropic theories of the Wesleys were undreamed of in his nature, and few, if any, ideals of lofty virtue pass before us as we read. And yet he claims a moral purpose in portraying all this coarse evil. Many, he declares, "are deterred from the practice of vice by the infamy and punishment to which it is liable from the laws and regulations of mankind."

Richardson and Fielding had shown the limits, purposes and capabilities of the novel; it remained for Smollett but to work in a field already cultivated and

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fertilized. In some ways he improved the field. As we have seen, he introduced a new type in his sailors, and a new scene of activity in his sea life; he painted the picaresque with a broadened stroke; he used satire and hearty humor in a manner not seen in previous prose fiction; he emphasized, if he did not indeed introduce, the difference between personal view-points of the same scene, character, or theory, and thus showed more clearly the variations in human nature; and, lastly, he may be said to have fathered the "Gothic" romance of the later eighteenth century by the gloom and tragedy with which he surrounded some of his ocean scenes and fights.

LAURENCE STERNE

Eight years after the appearance of *Peregrine Pickle* there appeared the first volume of what is perhaps the oddest and most eccentric novel in all the world's fiction—*The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*. Year after year the volumes appeared until the ninth and last one of 1767, four years before Smollett's last and best story, *Humphrey Clinker*. The author of this queer mixture of ridicule, pathos, forced humor, and delicate sentiment, Laurence Sterne (1713–1768), was fully as queer as his book. Born at Clonmel, Ireland, the son of a wandering soldier, and one of a large number of weak children born during the hurried camp life, he had, as a child, few opportunities to show that subtle genius which he undoubtedly possessed. He roamed about with the regiment for some years; but, in 1731, his father having been killed in a duel in Jamaica, a relative took him in hand, and from 1732 to 1735 he

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was a student in Jesus College, Cambridge. At school, however, he seemed but an average fellow. In 1738 he became a country parson, married a woman who brought him an extra "living," and for more than twenty years he preached, dabbled in painting, played the violin, indulged in a deal of vice, quarreled with his wife because of his intimacy with other women, and told shamefully coarse jokes at rich men's tables. A hypocrite in every path of life he entered, he could strike off at a moment's notice, a noble thought, such as: "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," or a nauseating tale such as we need not relate in this work. The country squires and other aristocrats welcomed him to their tables, not because he added honor to the occasion, but because the indecent jokes had an additional piquancy when heard from the lips of a clergyman.

At forty-six Sterne produced the first volume of *Tristram*, and published it at York, January 1, 1760, and immediately had the English reading public at his feet. Now followed seven years of hilarious life, the only edifying features of which were the appearances of new volumes of *Tristram's* curious conglomeration. Meanwhile Sterne's health broke; he spent a year on the Continent, but was back in England in 1764. After spending about a year at home, he was compelled to return once more to Southern Europe, where he remained during a portion of 1765 and 1766. Besides finishing *Tristram*, he was busy writing another work, a two-volume *Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick* (1768). Now, however, the body was exhausted by the labors of both fiction and vice. He wrote to friends: "I have torn my whole frame into

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pieces by my feelings." The truth of his statement was proved by his sudden death, March 18, 1768. His whole life had been out of the path of custom, and even in death fate would not allow him the customary rest; it is said that his body was stolen by Cambridge professors of medicine and dissected—perhaps in a vain effort to locate the source of his whimsical wit.

Whim and wit—these are the elements ever present in his work. Gosse¹¹ declares that his humor is sometimes worthy of Shakespeare. He plagiarizes outrageously; but nevertheless his original way of combining his plagiarism, his fancy, his insinuating wit, his keen observations of man, and his piquant manner of putting things, place him among the greater writers of English fiction. We can point out, without the least difficulty, where he appropriates this part from Cervantes and that from Rabelais, this from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and that from Swift's satirical writings, much of the plan from Arbuthnot's *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* (1741), and ideas and jokes from a score of famous wits of both England and the Continent. But everything he took he permeated with his own personality, and each pilfered portion seems to belong as naturally in its place as a piece in a patchwork quilt.

The book is indeed a literary patchwork quilt. Everything in it is topsyturvy. The very name of it is misleading. Tristram Shandy is not born until the third volume, and does not do much after he is born. The preface also appears in the third volume. Sterne informs us that he is going to leave certain chapters to our imagination, and after he has carried us forward a

¹¹ *Eighteenth-Century Literature*, p. 270.

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hundred pages, decides to write the chapter himself, and not trust to our imagination. He often starts a chapter, suddenly concludes that it is useless, and then passes to the next. It is the most curious hodgepodge that ever assumed the name of fiction. Eccentric subjects are discussed in eccentric manners. It possesses a mass of digressions, commentaries, trivial sermonettes, and grave dissertations on worthless subjects. There is hardly a direct page in the book. Indeed Sterne shies at directness like a frisky horse that disdains the straight road. Plotless, we might call the whole work; he pushes Smollett's carelessness in form to chaos; and yet when we finish the work we realize that we have been in an atmosphere of reality, and have associated with characters that we shall remember throughout all our days.

In this witty commentary on life, this series of hints, this collection of odds and ends where really nothing of importance happens, it is the characters that hold our attention. With all the leisure and detail that the slowest of readers could desire, the thoughts, conversations, and petty acts of these truly living beings are reported until we dare not doubt the existence of the strange group. It is a book of fools. Mr. Shandy, the meditative, speculative fool, can not buy his boy Tristram a pair of trousers or shoes until he looks up the history of these articles and deeply considers what the past ages deemed the best forms. Uncle Toby is an innocent fool, who, with his pipe and maps of the latest campaigns, sits in blissful ignorance of his danger, until the Widow Wadman captures him. See how finely this catastrophe in Uncle Toby's life is portrayed. Day after day he

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has been working with Corporal Trim on his tiny fortress in the open field laid out for the purpose; he has been very busy and very happy; but Widow Wadman, with deep-laid schemes, has built a summer house on the border that she may view the activities. A bit of wind and dust aid her vastly.

“‘I am half distracted, Captain Shandy,’ said Mrs. Wadman, holding up her cambric handkerchief to her left eye, as she approached the door of my uncle Toby’s sentry-box,—‘a mote, or sand, or something—I know not what—has got into this eye of mine; do look into it; it is not in the white.’

“‘In saying which Mrs. Wadman edged herself close in beside my uncle Toby, and squeezing herself down upon the corner of his bench, she gave him an opportunity of doing it without rising up. ‘Do look into it,’ said she.

“‘Honest soul! thou didst look into it with as much innocency of heart as ever child looked into a rare show box; and ’t were as much a sin to have hurt thee.

“‘If a man will be peeping of his own accord into things of that nature, I have nothing to say to it.

“‘The difficulty was to get my uncle Toby to look at one at all. ’T is surmounted. And,—

“‘I see him yonder with his pipe pendulous in his hand, and the ashes falling out of it, looking—and—looking—then rubbing his eyes and looking again, with twice the good nature that ever Galileo looked for a spot in the sun.

“‘In vain! for, by all the powers which animate the organ—Widow Wadman’s left eye shines this moment

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as lucid as her right; there is neither mote, nor sand, or dust, or chaff, or speck, or particle of opaque matter floating in it—there is nothing, my dear, paternal uncle! but one lambent, delicious fire furtively shooting out from every part of it, in all directions, into thine.

“If thou lookest, Uncle Toby, in search of this mote one moment longer thou art undone.

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“‘I protest, Madam,’ said my uncle Toby, ‘I can see nothing whatever in your eye.’

“‘It is not in the white,’ said Mrs. Wadman. My uncle Toby looked with might and main into the pupil.

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“‘It was not, Madam, a rolling eye—a romping or a wanton one; nor was it an eye sparkling, petulant or imperious, of high claims and terrifying exactions, which would have curdled at once that milk of human nature of which my uncle Toby was made up; but ’t was an eye full of gentle salutations and soft responses, speaking not like the trumpet-stop of some ill-made organ, in which many an eye I talk to holds coarse converse, but whispering, soft, like the last low accents of an expiring saint. ‘How can you live com-fortless, Captain Shandy, and alone, without a bosom to lean your head on or trust your cares to?’

“‘It was an eye—

“‘But I shall be in love with it myself if I say another word about it.

“‘It did my uncle Toby’s business. . . .’”

Now, all these hints, broken sentences, fragments of narrative may seem very affected; and so they are; but they compose some of the most artistic and difficult

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affectation in all literature. We leave the book with accurate images of certain situations and of the figures taking part, and yet we should seek in vain for any long or definite descriptions of them. Slight delicate touches, scattered hither and thither at length, however, do their perfect work, and we close the novel repaid for all the blind galleries and false doors we have entered and all the side steps and retracing of steps we have undergone.

Broken as is the work, each little portion is a gem of its kind. Whether it be a scene, a conversation, or an episode, it is a bit of description hard to excel. Sterne was a man who was constantly striking an attitude, and so are his characters. A gesture by Uncle Toby or Corporal Trim often conveys more meaning than a multitude of words. But amidst all this affectedness and this posing, there is many a touch of the softer sentiments not to be found in the work of Fielding or Smollett. Note the famous description of Lefevre's death.

“A sick brother-officer should have the best quarters, Trim; and if we had him with us,—we could tend and look to him.—Thou art an excellent nurse thyself, Trim;—and what with thy care of him, and the old woman's, and his boy's, and mine together, we might recruit him again at once, and set him upon his legs.

“—In a fortnight or three weeks, added my uncle Toby, smiling, he might march.—He will never march, an' please your Honour, in this world, said the Corporal.—He *will* march, said my uncle Toby, rising up from the side of the bed with one shoe off.—An' please your Honour, said the Corporal, he will never march but to

his grave.—He *shall* march, cried my uncle Toby, marching the foot which had a shoe on, though without advancing an inch,—he *shall* march to his regiment.—He cannot stand it, said the Corporal.—He shall be supported, said my uncle Toby,—He'll drop at last, said the Corporal, and what will become of his boy?—He *shall not* drop, said my uncle Toby, firmly.—Ah, well-a-day!—do what we can for him, said Trim, maintaining his point,—the poor soul will die.—*He shall not die, by G—*, cried my uncle Toby.

“—The *accusing spirit*, which flew up to Heaven's chancery with the oath, blushed as he gave it in;—and the *recording angel*, as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word, and blotted it out forever.”

And yet, about all his sentiment or sentimentality Sterne has a subtle touch of sarcasm. He loves to tell a “sad, sad story” with a sly twinkle in one corner of his wicked eyes. Versed in this world's affairs, he had lost all delusions, and with all his assumed eccentricity in writing, he stands opposed to the morbid sentimentalism of such writers as Richardson and Rousseau, and *indirectly*—which was his way—declares against the melancholy or overwise cranks met with in daily life.

“RASSELAS”

There remained during the middle years of the eighteenth century but two novels showing positive genius, Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759) and Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* (1766). The facts of Johnson's life and the eccentricities of his nature are too well known to require rehearsal here. Melancholy by nature and suddenly plunged into genuine grief by the death of his

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mother, he brought together in his *Rasselas* the fruit of many years of observation and experience. The old cry of the preacher in *Ecclesiastes* and of Omar Khayyám is reëchoed in this solemn utterance of the modern centuries: Vanity, vanity, all is vanity. Written, though it was, in the nights of two weeks, in order to pay his mother's funeral expenses, it shows no signs of haste, but rolls forth its deep-toned message with melancholy dignity and heavy eloquence. It is the work of a mature and naturally solid mind which has reached certain definite conclusions concerning this earthly existence, and which, therefore, speaks with authority when it begins the plaintive story with those pessimistic words: "Ye, who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope; who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow; attend to the history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia."

A young prince and his sister are kept by a careful father away from the world in a mountain fastness known as Happy Valley. No evil enters there; all apparently is ideal; and yet even this pleasantness becomes monotonous. Rasselas with his sister and an old philosopher, Imlac, at length escape and go into the world to find that happiness which they firmly believe is there. They look among the thoughtless for it; it is not there. They look among the wise with their theories and philosophies; but lo, it is not there. They walk in the courts and the cities; it is not there. All, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Back to the secluded valley they wander, back like old men returning to

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dreams of childhood, there to find at least some semblance of the happiness for which they have sought elsewhere in vain. It is indeed the first chapters of *Ecclesiastes* told in the form of a novel.

Of course *Rasselas* lacks many of the qualities and elements we expect in fiction. There is practically no clash of wills; there is no love-making; there are no highly exciting adventures; there is no deep psychological investigation; but there is indeed a great ethical lesson made clear by the experiences of a little group of searchers for truth. All this, it should be noted, is in a language sonorous, solemn, beautiful with that large beauty so peculiarly Johnson's. It is the wisdom of a man who has lived, suffered, and conquered. In its solemnity, its true pathos, its high elevation above the petty struggles of life, it seems like a lonely voice crying in the wilderness of eighteenth-century earthiness and materialism.

"VICAR OF WAKEFIELD"

Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* is also a fruit of experience. Its author "who wrote like an angel but talked like a poor Poll" had suffered the rebuffs of fortune, had led a life so thoroughly human in its blunders, vanities, humiliations and griefs and joys, had become so versed in the nature of humanity that when he put pen to paper he knew only too well this "sorry scheme of things" and could not but give us a picture true, beautiful, touching. His genuine kindness of heart made all men love him. When he died Burke burst into tears; Reynolds, who had refused to stop painting on Sunday, laid aside his brushes; Garrick

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mourned as for a brother; and strangest of all, the great Johnson could not talk! This same innate kindness made him try to reconstruct the "sorry scheme" more to our heart's desire; he could not allow the innocent to suffer long; he felt it his duty to twist the plot so that all should end in happiness for those to whom it was due.

The book is one of the happiest efforts in English literature, and yet the plot is one of the most ridiculously impossible things ever conceived in that literature. We are asked to believe that a character is completely disguised by merely changing his suit of clothes. We are told that a nephew is practically the same age as his uncle, although that nephew is the son of the uncle's younger brother; the whole work is hastily and loosely slung together. But the *spirit* of it all—the same spirit that has made the *Deserted Village* beloved for generations—makes full amends for its multitude of petty technical defects. Here, too, are the sweetness and light, the sweet reasonableness, the ideals of the great Teacher of Galilee that will some day make this world a gentler and a nobler place. As Goldsmith points out in his preface, there is another universal element in this story: "The hero of this piece unites in himself the three greatest characters upon earth:—he is a priest, a husbandman, and the father of a family. He is drawn as ready to teach and ready to obey—as simple in affluence and majestic in adversity."

There is a refreshing purity in this narrative—exceedingly refreshing because so frequently absent from the other fiction of the century. True, the insertion of the visit of the two "ladies" from London is a slight

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surrender to the coarse tastes of the day; true, there is an abduction in it; but the villain finds himself tricked at last and legally married to the woman whom he had hoped to ruin. These things, however, are but incidents in the course of the work; through it all are the pure air of the country roadside, the fragrance of flowers and ripening fruit, a charming suggestion of sane and strong purity. The very humor of the story—totally unlike the humor we have been dealing with—is clean and innocent. The selling of the colt for a gross of green spectacles has passed into the gallery of classic incidents. “ ‘A fig for the silver rims,’ said my wife in a passion: ‘I dare swear they won’t sell for above half the money at the rate of broken silver, five shillings the ounce.’ ‘You need be under no uneasiness,’ cried I, ‘about selling the rims, for they are not worth sixpence, for I perceive that they are only copper varnished over.’ ‘What!’ cried my wife, ‘not silver, the rims not silver!’ ‘No,’ cried I, ‘no more silver than your saucepan.’ ‘And so,’ returned she, ‘we have parted with the colt, and have only got a gross of green spectacles with copper rims and shagreen cases! A murrain take such trumpery! The blockhead has been imposed upon, and should have known his company better.’ ‘There, my dear,’ cried I, ‘you are wrong; he should not have known them at all.’ ‘Marry, hang the idiot,’ returned she, ‘to bring such stuff! If I had them, I would throw them into the fire!’ ‘There, again, you are wrong, my dear,’ cried I, ‘for though they are copper, we will keep them by us, as copper spectacles, you know, are better than nothing.’ ” How totally different from the rough play of Fielding, the coarse

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practical jokes of Smollett, and the suggestive wit of Sterne.

The characters are permanent because true and satisfying. Dr. Primrose may make mistakes; but his plain decency and blunt common sense endear him to all who hate hypocrisy, and make him more nearly an ideal man than any of the wild physical beings created by Fielding or Smollett. With his gentleness, reasonableness, his pure dignity, he does indeed, as Scott says, reconcile us to human nature. There is many a touch of sly ridicule in the work: Mrs. Primrose's sudden efforts to marry her daughters far above their rank; the endeavors of these daughters to increase their natural beauty by means of the well-known artificial aids; the aristocratic talk of the fine "ladies" just arrived from London; but, on the whole, there is a spirit of easy forgiveness that must have sounded strange indeed to eighteenth-century ears. Life, in spite of its trials, is portrayed as so very harmonious in this book; the good and right way seems so reasonable; surely, the work was a valuable lesson for its generation.

We know, as we close the story, that blessings are unnaturally heaped up at the last; painfully we realize that it is not so in life; grudgingly we admit that in so far it deviates from truth, and therefore from art; but then we know that it has charmed its readers all these years, and we feel confident that it will do so for centuries to come. Why is this? Simply because Goldsmith puts before us in living form an ideal of beauty. What is beauty? Is it not your conception in anything of that freedom for which you yourself are longing? The Vicar comes before us free from the

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petty envies, the malice, the back-biting, revengeful nature that have long made humanity unlovely, and we love him and consider him beautiful for his very freedom. Whatsoever things are good, whatsoever things are of good report—these he clings to. It would be folly to attempt to separate the ethical and purely literary in a discussion of this masterpiece. Put before us with simple honesty and frankness, the Vicar is effective because he is innately good; though we may smile at him, many of us will wish that we were more like him.

PROBLEM-NOVELS

So far our novelists have taken human nature and the emotions of the heart as their theme. Having no special theory to prove concerning this or that "ism," they have given strong, well-rounded and universal views of man, his ideals, his feelings, and his motives. Now, however, as the novel began to degenerate, its writers brought forward their little special theories of life, their miserable little hobbies, and forthwith rode these (and with them the novel) almost to destruction. This man has a theory as to politics, and down it goes into a story; another has a belief as to education; it forthwith becomes a novel; another thinks that the supernatural is the greatest cause of emotions, and he writes a "Gothic" romance. Whenever a nation begins to use its fiction as a means of expressing its petty hobbies, that moment its fiction has entered the road to death.

LELAND'S "LONGSWORD"

Charles Johnstone's contemptible *Adventures of a Guinea* (1760), with its Smollett-like hatred pushed to

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brutal, disgusting ferocity, is one of the earliest examples of this use of the novel for exploiting an opinion—in short, for hobby-riding. A far more important example is Thomas Leland's *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury* (1762), in which the author, seized with a mania for the weird, wrote a book of thrills, and thus unconsciously helped to father the Gothic romance, and as a further evolution, the historical romance. As has been pointed out, Smollett makes use of grim terror in some of his ocean scenes, and it may be that Leland took the hint from him, and to some extent from Defoe. However that may be, the story contains some portions as weirdly romantic as one could desire. As a character creeps into a black graveyard, a clock in the tower above him strikes twelve, the owl gives a hideous screech, and the man throws himself down over a new-made grave. In *Longsword* we find also some of those elements which we have long expected to find in the old-fashioned historical novel—the knights, the tournaments, the castles, in short, what Scott calls the “big bow-wow strain.”

“CASTLE OF OTRANTO”

Hard upon this came Walpole's romantic attempt, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Supposed to be a tale of the thirteenth century, it possesses the gloomy castle with hidden doors, dark passages, subterranean corridors, and deep dungeons. Manfred, a blood-thirsty tyrant, holds this huge pile in unlawful possession; a brave monk threatens him with God's vengeance; a giant rattles his great frame in a dark upper chamber; the frightened servants move in terror of their very breath; as Manfred's son enters the great hall for his

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marriage, a mighty helmet suspended from the ceiling falls and crushes him. It is a fated family, like that in Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher*. Horace Walpole was brilliantly equipped for the work of writing such a story of old days; for as a student of customs he possessed much accurate knowledge of the past. But in his attempt to combine the traits of the old Norman-French romance with the traits of modern fiction, he undertook the impossible; logical as is his series of impossible or supernatural incidents, one would have to be indeed ultraromantic to be in sympathy with the story, and many doubtless would find it a source of humor rather than of terror.

The realistic manner seemingly can not be applied to the impossible romances of ancient times. The story of King Arthur moves in such an atmosphere of the unreal that we willingly take the impossible for granted; but when, instead of that early atmosphere, we are given the sophisticated air of the eighteenth century, we find giants, bleeding statues, ghosts, and talking skeletons altogether out of the question. In other words, we can not reconcile ourselves to a modern human being's living among supernatural beings and taking part in supernatural deeds. We can allow the Greene Knight to pick up his head and go about his business; but if Smith has his head cut off, we demand that Smith be out of business for all time.

CLARA REEVE

In 1777 Clara Reeve followed Walpole's model in her *Champion of Virtue*, afterwards called *The Old English Baron*. This woman saw the irreconcilable elements in

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Walpole's *Otranto*, and in her book allowed the matter to go as far as ghosts, but considered them as enough of the supernatural—with which opinion doubtless we all agree. If, however, we are to take a sip of the medicine, we might as well take the whole dose; if we must meet a ghost, why not see the magic helmet, hear the giant rattle his bones, or have a conversation with a statue possessed of too much blood? Moreover, she does not prepare us for the supernatural nearly so well as does Walpole. Note but one paragraph: “‘God defend us!’ said Edmund; ‘but I verily believe that the person that owned this armour lies buried under us.’ Upon this a dismal hollow groan was heard as if from underneath. A solemn silence ensued, and marks of fear were visible upon all three; the groan was thrice heard.” This is thrust upon us without any merciful warning whatever.

In spite, however, of a certain lack of logic in her view-point, Clara Reeve composed a well-constructed piece of fiction—a story that shows the progress of weird romance and some elements of the historical romance.

In the course of these novels the charm of the supernatural and purely romantic at length gave way to the charm of the supposedly historical. Perhaps the first of these historical tales is Sophie Lee's *Recess* (1783–1786), in which the days of Queen Elizabeth are recalled and the Earl of Leicester, intriguing with Lady Essex, poisons his wife with a dish of carp which she had intended for him; and in which various other incidents overlooked by authentic historians are portrayed in high colors. But Sophie Lee was some years ahead of her times, and historical fiction had to wait until the

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so-called Gothic romance had exhausted itself in an effort to bring back the weird *spirit* of a past that never existed.

“VATHEK”

William Beckford, author of *Vathek, an Arabian Tale* (1787), in an effort to realize this past, endeavored not only to write of it, but also to live in it. He built in Wiltshire an immense pile which he called Fonthill Abbey, and here, at the age of twenty, among romantic environments made to order, wrote in French his strange conglomeration of the horrible and the grotesque. An English schoolmaster, Samuel Henly, translated it without the author's knowledge, and it soon had a wide reading in England as well as in France. Byron declared it far better than *Rasselas*. It is the story of a young prince who indulges in sensuality, and who goes with astonishing speed along the primrose path that leads to the everlasting bonfire. The fate to which the doomed are sentenced is at least quaint, if not quite overwhelming. The Hall of Eblis is strewn with gold-dust and saffron, and censurs burn ambergris and aloes, and here the lost, with hearts wrapped in flames, wander up and down forever and forever. Beckford was capable of some decidedly vivid descriptions; but altogether the book is shallow, and has not at all that wisdom which experience had granted the great Doctor Johnson.

MRS. RADCLIFFE

Now followed Mrs. Radcliffe, who, between 1789 and 1797 produced such weird romances as *The Castles of*

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Athlen and Dunbayne, the *Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Omitting the ghosts altogether, she describes in a "ghostly" manner the fears and nervous hallucinations of her characters, and then explains them by natural causes. The creatures, seemingly supernatural, turn out to be merely creations of a mind in nervous distress, or sometimes real human beings. For instance, the heroine, on a dark stormy night, may find a musty old manuscript in a chest in the gloomy castle; on reading it she discovers that a murder has been committed in this very room; she discovers a hidden door bolted on the outside; she goes to bed in nervous dread; far in the night she hears the bolt slip back; she sees a figure approach her bed; she is frozen with fear; it is undoubtedly a ghost; the figure gazes for a brief time, and suddenly retires; it is later discovered to be a real man. In her attention to plot and environment Mrs. Radcliffe allows her characters to degenerate into mere types; but the atmosphere is produced with genuine skill and power. There is a blood-curdling horror about it; we are compelled to realize the agony of this lonely woman. Few English-speaking writers except Poe have very greatly excelled the author in this genius for the weird.

Using Sicily or Southern France for her setting, and thus easily appealing to our sense of the romantic, portraying vividly scenes that she herself never saw, making good use of bewildering corridors, hidden passages, haunted churches, and similar romantic machinery, Mrs. Radcliffe produced work nothing short of remarkable. But when we discover that the supposed ghost is a real man, not even her ability can prevent an anticlimax.

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Yet her use of the horrible phases and forces of Nature, and of the awe-inspiring, her careful preparation for the introduction of the supernatural, make great amends for such a defect. Note but this passage:

“From Beaujeu the road had constantly ascended, conducting the travelers into the higher regions of the air, where immense glaciers exhibited their frozen horrors, and eternal snow whitened the summits of the mountains. They often paused to contemplate these stupendous scenes, and, seated on some wild cliff, where only the ilex or the larch could flourish, looked over dark forests of fir, and precipices where human foot had never wandered, into the glen—so deep that the thunder of the torrent which was seen to foam along the bottom was scarcely heard to murmur. Over these crags rose others of stupendous height and fantastic shape; some shooting into cones; others impending far over their base, in huge masses of granite, along whose broken ridges was often lodged a weight of snow, that, trembling even to the vibration of a sound, threatened to bear destruction in its course to the vale. . . . The deep silence of these solitudes was broken only at intervals by the scream of the vultures, seen cowering round some cliff below, or by the cry of the eagle sailing high in the air; except when the travelers listened to the hollow thunder that sometimes muttered at their feet.”

It would be beyond the scope of this study to investigate in closer detail the progress of Gothic romance, and what some critics consider its offshoot, the historical romance. We might trace the first through Lewis's extravagant *Monk*, to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*,

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and the second, through a long series of tales, such as Ann Fuller's *Alan Fitzosborne* (1787) and *The Son of Ethelwulf* (1789); James White's *Earl Strongbow* (1789), *Historic Tales* (1790) and *King Richard* (1791), Clara Reeve's *Sir Roger de Clarendon* (1793), Pownall's *Antiquarian Romances* (1795), and William Godwin's *St. Leon* (1799), down to Jane Porter's *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803). There is a popular idea that Scott evolved the historical romance out of his inner consciousness; the fact is, the whole method, manner, and purpose had been made clear years before he became the incomparable master of the field.

NOVELS OF PURPOSE

These forerunners of Scott in the use of the weird and historical in romance had been able to see clearly only one of the sources of interest that might be found in a good novel. To them the supernatural, the ghostly, or the superhuman deed of ancient characters was the element to be emphasized in arousing horror or an atmosphere of the heroic. To another class of hobby-riding fiction-writers of the eighteenth century belonged the so-called novelists of purpose. Their efforts were generally concentrated on two problems: how man should be educated and trained, and how man should be governed; and generally the result of all their speculations was the "back to nature" scheme so frequently reappearing in the history of humanity.

"FOOL OF QUALITY"

The first of the educational or pedagogical novels in English seems to have been Henry Brooke's *Fool of*

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Quality (1766-1770). The author was a gentle, lovable man, one whom even Pope and Swift thoroughly liked and trusted. Married before the age of twenty-one, in the course of his married life father of twenty-two children, he spent an existence of unending struggle against poverty, and died in a remote region of Ireland attended by the only child who had survived. Himself denied the comforts of life, he filled his book with a dream of wealth and impossible charity. A boy, Henry Clinton, the future Earl of Moreland, is carried off by a benevolent old fellow, his uncle in disguise, and the description of the manner in which the youngster is trained fills a volume, as edited by Charles Kingsley, of four hundred and twenty-seven pages. Kingsley declared it one of the greatest novels of the world; John Wesley, in spite of his belief in publishing only religious works, had it reprinted for his followers, and said it was a volume "the most excellent in its kind that I have seen either in the English or any other language . . . one of the most beautiful pictures that ever was dreamed in the world."

All this seems absurd to those of us who in this modern day dare to look into the book. The plot is so slight as to bring absolutely no interest to the work; the boy, going on errands of mercy to hospitals, asylums, slums, and similar localities, is very similar to the boy we have met in the old-fashioned Sunday-school book; the sight of his bestowing his uncle's money most liberally on various institutions is rather ridiculous to a thoughtful reader. The moralizings and other digressions are altogether too obtrusive; some portions are utterly impossible. Yet Charles Kingsley, in his

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enthusiasm, maintains that it contains "deep and grand ethics" and "broad and genial humanity." These things might indeed make a worthy volume, but not by any means a readable novel; here the ethical purpose is so direct and apparent that artistic portrayal of the ethical ideal is rendered impossible.

THOMAS DAY

Thirteen years after the last volume of the *Fool of Quality* had been issued, Thomas Day published another pedagogical novel in his *Sanford and Merton* (1783-1789). This work, however, was intended not only for parents, but for the children, and by means of short tales and dialogues endeavored to inspire the little ones with an undying enthusiasm for botany, geography, sociology, ethnology, and all the other "ologies" and "isms" thrust upon the helpless youngsters in our own day. Day might be called the literary father of the new woman. His heroine was not of the "clinging-vine" type; she was robust, took cold plunges, and every morning took a jaunt of ten or twelve miles in sunshine or rain. She was acquainted, not only with domestic science, but literature, mathematics, and "nature study." It was a direct slap in the face for Rousseau's ideal woman, who was altogether too tender and feminine.

ELIZABETH INCHBALD

This business of writing a pedagogical treatise under the guise of fiction was continued in Elizabeth Inchbald's *Simple Story* (1791). Mrs. Inchbald was a woman of remarkable strength, versatility, and beauty,

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and doubtless the story of her own life would have been more interesting than any piece of fiction she wrote. Having run away from home to enter upon a stage career, she became a popular London actress, married a worthless fellow, and for several years did the merest drudgery of the household. Her beauty attracted many men who hoped to gain her for a mistress; but their efforts were in vain. "Last Thursday," we find her writing, "I finished scouring my bed-chamber while a coach with a coronet and two footmen waited at the door to take me an airing." Yet, in spite of her slavish labor and her courtships, she found time to produce so much literature that in her later years she possessed a comfortable income. Her *Simple Story* (1791) and her *Nature and Art* (1796) made her name known in every cultured home of England in her day. Sometimes incorrect in grammar and rhetoric, and possessing plots with a will of their own, her novels have at times a genuine pathetic power, and also, like the work of Miss Edgeworth, the admirable virtue of causing us to forget the author in our interest in her book.

The *Simple Story* is directed against that strange institution, the young ladies' boarding school, and Mrs. Inchbald spares no pains to make clear the ignorance, indolence, and vanity fostered in such places. The heroine, Miss Milner, with such training, is left to the care of a Catholic priest and falls in love with him. He becomes Earl of Elmwood, is therefore released from his church vows, and of course marries the girl. But, with a weakness of character brought about by flabby training in childhood, she becomes unfaithful and dies

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miserably. Her child is sent to one of the father's country houses, and is never seen or spoken of by him. At length, however, she is carried off by a libertine, and the father, suddenly awakening to his duty, rescues her, shows his paternal love, and marries her to his nephew. All this, be it remembered, happened because a girl was sent to a fake educational institution.

Mrs. Inchbald belongs also to the other group—the novelists of protest, or those who endeavor to show how men should be governed. Her *Nature and Art*, like Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, endeavors to show the cruelty of the modern social condition, and to portray a potentially good man who is made a victim of its unjust demands. This fiction revolution against society had begun some years before, and was but one of the signs of the romantic movement now sweeping on with great power. Men were now demanding more rights as individuals; democracy was in the air; America had struggled into political freedom; the French were making a similar effort; a civic upheaval seemed to pass over the world. The cry of equality and fraternity became quite the fashion.

ROBERT BAGE

Robert Bage, in such a novel as *Barham Downs* (1788), was one of the first of these novelists of protest. In this work we have a defense of a woman who has been ruined by a libertine lord. In his *Hermesprong* (1796) we find a picture of an earthly paradise among the American Indians, who spend very agreeable and innocent lives playing and singing and sleeping in the sun. In these works, as well as his *James Wallace*,

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The Fair Syrian, and *Mount Henneth*, Bage presents us with a bountiful supply of political theory, but precious little plot; while the upper classes are shown as vicious degenerates, and the poor man as the rightful king.

THOMAS HOLCROFT

Four years after the appearance of *Barham Downs*, Thomas Holcroft, another of the London revolutionary novelists, displayed his radicalism in *Anna St. Ives* (1792). Here the red flag of anarchy waves defiantly. "Everything," he declares "in which government interferes is spoiled." Property rights were an especial abomination to Holcroft. "You maintain that what you possess is your own. I affirm that it is the property of him who wants it most." Having protested against permanent marriages, ranks in the social structure, and many other orthodox views, he paints a beautiful picture of the times to come when there shall be no personal property, when only "agreements" between man and woman shall exist, when labor shall be universal, but very brief, and when there will be no preachers, lawyers, judges, and officers of the law; for none will be necessary. Holcroft's *Alwyn*, *Hugh Trevor*, and *Bryan Perdue* are of the same character, and doubtless brought joy to the enthusiastic group of free thinkers writing so zealously in their London home.

CHARLOTTE SMITH

Charlotte Smith, another member of the group, appears to have been the most prolific novelist of the eighteenth century. For years she practically supported her

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father's large family by her pen. Following out the free-love theory of her revolutionary associates she described in her *Desmond* (1792) a young fellow's passion for another man's wife, a passion, however, which was not wild and unregulated, but exceedingly well trained and generous. Luckily the husband becomes a sot and is killed, and the widow, having very decently waited a year, marries her lover. The author followed this work with what is probably the best known of her stories, *The Old Manor House* (1793), where once more, as in Bage's *Hermesprong*, we are shown an earthly paradise, the chief characteristics of which seem to be exceedingly inexpensive costumes, freedom from conventionalities and law, and a sort of year-round picnic with plenty of dancing and singing.

"CALEB WILLIAMS"

Of all this group William Godwin is the most famous and the most influential writer. Before undertaking fiction he had written much, but without pronounced originality, upon sociological themes. Malthus had attacked and completely demolished his theories, and by those who were not particularly enthusiastic towards socialism, he was looked upon as rather shallow. We are not surprised to find, therefore, a conspicuous lack of originality in his novels. His plots lack the connected effect of a good narrative; his theories become altogether too prominent; he rides his hobby until it is jaded.

Magazine editors sometimes declare that every man has at least one good story in him. *Caleb Williams* (1794) may have been Godwin's one story. As the

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first detective story in the English language, and possessing much of the character of the Gothic romance, it had great possibilities for becoming a genuine masterpiece; but the suggestive plot is rendered weak by the author's lack of concentrative artistic power. It is a story written to show how man becomes the destroyer of man; how society with its tyrannical conventionalities makes men its victims, and transforms them to villains or moral and mental wrecks. Falkland, a man of high family, guarding his honor from stain, stabs his enemy, Tyrrel, at night. Two innocent men are executed for the crime; Falkland, more from fear of disgrace than of death, remains silent. Henceforth his every thought is given to guarding the secret. Caleb Williams, his secretary, discovers it, however, but promises never to reveal it. But when Caleb wishes to change positions, Falkland objects, and has him arrested and imprisoned for robbery. The young martyr escapes, but is pursued by Falkland's servants, and, thus driven to despair, reveals his employer's crime, and compels Falkland to confess. Thus the present social structure, thinks Godwin, makes fools or knaves of us all.

The story was a great success in the closing years of the eighteenth century, and Byron's threat to his wife that he would treat her as Falkland had treated Caleb Williams, revived the interest in the work in the earlier nineteenth century. But to us of to-day there appear so many weak points in the tale that in not a few pages it seems utterly ridiculous. No good cause is given for Tyrrel's hatred; Caleb finds out the secret with entirely too much ease; we consider Caleb a fool for being persecuted to such an extent. Moreover, the characters

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are not vividly living personalities; we care little whether they flourish or suffer. And yet Hazlitt declares that *Caleb* and Godwin's other famous novel *St. Leon* (1799) are "two of the most splendid and impressive works of the imagination" composed in their time. But Hazlitt's critical judgment was biased by his enthusiasm for Godwin's sociological views. Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft were devout prophets of a future golden age; Godwin longing for and foreseeing a period when men would be so perfect that anarchy, or absolute lack of law, would be possible, and Mary Wollstonecraft seeing a day when women would be free from all shackles. Both may have been equally in earnest; but neither one was quite fitted to write a masterpiece of fiction.

Thus the hobby-riding continued into the new century. It showed indeed one very commendable trait almost absent from English society in the days when Richardson was writing *Pamela*: men and women had at last come to desire some ideal state far removed from the mere passions of the flesh and the power gained by brute force. But the novel was not, and perhaps is not yet the instrument for such theories, admirable as they may be; and with the coming of Jane Porter and Sir Walter Scott the use of fiction for such a purpose waned to a great extent. But, in another direction these lofty desires found a far nobler expression; Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*, *Alastor*, and *Prometheus Unbound*, and the fervid eloquence of Byron uttered with far more grandeur what these novelists had falteringly stammered forth.

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HENRY MACKENZIE

Fiction portraying manners and customs had now long been popular in England. Mrs. Manley and Mrs. Behn had written just such books, of the foul sort, however, near the close of the seventeenth century; Defoe had appealed to the same curiosity in his *Plague Year*; Addison and Steele had made much of it in the *Sir Roger de Coverley Papers*; Richardson had shown manners incidentally in *Pamela*; *Tom Jones* is a treasury for eighteenth-century rural manners; Laurence Sterne had shown, not only the manners, but the mannerisms of certain eighteenth-century individuals. After these greater figures had passed away, their imitators lingered long. Some, such as Griffith, the author of *Koran* (1770), were exceedingly uninspired and dull; some, like Henry Mackenzie, author of the most sentimental novel in the language, *The Man of Feeling* (1771), caused their characters to do more posing than even those of Sterne. The hero in the last-named work is full of nerves, is always on the verge of collapsing, and is liable to die at any moment. He is so shy that he can not confess his love until he is bedfast, and when his lady accepts him, he dies of the shock. The plot is *nil*; it is but fragments of a manuscript which had been used by a sportsman preacher for gun-wadding; its tattered condition is very suggestive of the hero's nervous system. The story has, however, some excellent traits; it is refined, it perceives the good as vividly as the bad; Mackenzie, like Addison, prefers to teach by ideals. Then, too, the influence of environment on a sensitive man is rather subtly traced.

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This novel, as well as Mackenzie's next one, *The Man of the World*, is related to the revolutionary fiction in that it is a protest against certain traits of society. In the second novel Sir Thomas Sindall, a resolute rascal, labors harder to seduce a woman than most men would to gain a fortune. Apparently he has very little real passion; but his whole pleasure lies in making the conquest. He teaches the girl's brother to gamble in order that he may ruin him and thus get him out of the way. The brother at length robs another gambler and is transported for twelve years. The sister is drugged and ruined by the young aristocrat; her child is given to a nurse and is supposed to have been drowned. Harriet, the sister, dies, and her father soon follows her. Years later the libertine brings back from the Continent a young lady committed to his care, and is about to ruin her when the nurse informs him that it is his own child. The brother returns from his penal exile and kills the libertine. The plot may be repulsive; but there is no coarseness in it. Vice is condemned and no scene is written for the sake of mere rudeness. There is real pathos in some pages of this as well as in Mackenzie's third story, *Julia de Roubigne*, which, according to Scott, is one of "the most heart-wringing histories."

Some of these novels of manners were maliciously written to ridicule the eccentricities of certain classes. Graves's *Spiritual Quixote* is a bitter fling at the Methodists—a miserable imitation of *Don Quixote*, in which the "hero," Geoffrey Wildgoose, reads such Puritanical books as *Crumbs of Comfort*, *Honeycombs for the Elect*, and *Spiritual Eyesalve and Cordials for Saints*, and then goes forth to convert the sinful British. Other novel-

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ists of this type, however, like Richard Cumberland, the dramatist, author of *Henry* (1795), simply tried to make a readjustment of such boisterous characters as Tom Jones to the milder, more moral conditions of the closing years of the century, and thus drew contrasts which are useful in our efforts to estimate the changes that had taken place.

MISS BURNEY

Of all these novelists of manners, doubtless two women, Fanny Burney and Miss Edgeworth, were the most successful. Fanny Burney was the daughter of a Norfolk organist and historian of music, to whose home came Johnson, the Thrales, Garrick, and other prominent people of her day. She had a talent for recording her impressions of men and women, and at the age of fifteen or sixteen collected these thoughts and pictures into a novel entitled *Caroline Evelyn*. She was constantly hampered, however, by a jealous step-mother, and went through the distressing ordeal of seeing the woman burn the manuscript of this youthful story. The chief points of the tale were still in her memory, and in later days she began her first published novel, *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778), where the destroyed manuscript had left off. This novel was published anonymously; even the publishers could not for some time discover the author; but when the secret was revealed the young authoress sprang into great fame.

Macaulay states that Miss Burney wrote admirably clean books, and so she did—for the eighteenth century. But oaths, rough and vulgar talk, horse play and con-

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versations of a rather familiar character are by no means absent. The book, dealing with the ideals, ideas, emotions, and difficulties that come to a refined, ambitious girl just entering womanhood, tells the story of *Evelina*, who, having been reared in a fashionable family, is maliciously harassed by her low relatives, and is almost prevented from marrying a nobleman because of their constant obtrusiveness. Thus we gain one of the best descriptions of eighteenth-century society to be found in fiction; for we get views of every plane of the social life from the highest to the humblest. Moreover, the story is interesting as a *story*. The plot moves smoothly and is a woven fabric, and not a patchwork. Every leading character in it is a real personality, and is delineated with a woman's eye for details and persistent concentration.

In both *Evelina* and *Cecilia* (1782) Miss Burney shows the new moral and social conditions that have entered. The old bullies and reckless libertines are no longer plentiful; but now appears in their place a "smart set" afflicted with ennui, superciliousness, and empty-headedness. Men do not shine in these books; a woman is writing for other women, and, in inspecting closely the male sex, fails to find in it anything prominently celestial or divine. The author is at times caustic; she takes delight in showing the glossy varnish of low politeness; with a touch of Thackeray's cynicism she pictures the vanities of the upper set with a rather merciless hand.

Miss Burney's third novel, *Camilla*, is scarcely ever glanced at in our day; her *Diary* and *Letters*, written after she became Madame d'Arblay in 1793, have almost

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suffered the same fate; but her first two novels have had an undoubted influence upon such writers as Jane Austen, Benjamin Disraeli, Bulwer-Lytton, and, possibly, Scott.

MARIA EDGEWORTH

Maria Edgeworth was another novelist influenced by the Burney fiction. Her stories of both English and Irish life are vivid pieces of descriptions of manners, customs, and national characteristics, and cause her to be considered something of a prophecy of Scott and Samuel Lover. Having lived for some time in the heart of Ireland, she was able to look upon England from the Irishman's standpoint, and in such tales as *The Absentee*, found in her *Fashionable Tales*, or her novel, *Castle Rackrent*, we have the peasant life of Erin shown with a sympathy found nowhere in English literature before her day. *Castle Rackrent* shows the wit, the humor, the sentiment, the pathos, the sturdiness of the Irishman in his own castle. The Irish in alien lands had been used before this for purposes of ridicule; but never before had the Irish knight, brave with Celtic rashness and Irish whisky, been made an object of admiration or sympathetic laughter. Here was humor created by truth. As we read we cease to wonder why *Waverley* has sometimes been called, "the Castle Rackrent of Scotland."

Miss Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) has to do, for the most part, with the familiar aristocratic life of London, and, while the descriptions are not immoral, they certainly are suggestive. There are good-for-nothing husbands and wives who go out for eighteenth-century

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“joy rides” and who flirt outrageously. There are reconciliations or violent separations—the latter accompanied by the thump of the trunk being hauled downstairs by the porter, while we expect the departing wife to shout in sternly dramatic tones, “Farewell—forever!” Miss Edgeworth has a didactic purpose in thrusting a young lady from the rural districts into such a circle. If her education has been correct—that is, not obtained at a boarding school—she will live an untainted life, and at length achieve victory by capturing a husband; otherwise she will become a flirt and sink into vice.

With all this, be it remembered, is a positive genius for description. Miss Edgeworth’s influence can be traced in the works of such writers as Scott, Charles Reade, Samuel Lover, and, to some extent, with Miss Burney, in those masterly pictures of society—the stories of Jane Austen.

CHAPTER VII

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SOCIAL AND LITERARY CONDITIONS

THE many tokens of an industrial, economic, religious, and intellectual awakening coming with the nineteenth century are too well known to need a fresh enumeration in this study. The formerly impossible became the modern commonplace; the miraculous ceased to be wonderful; the dreams of medieval romances became the matter-of-fact inventions of modern genius. It is doubtful whether any thousand years of the world's history, with the possible exception of the Renaissance period, equaled this one century in marvelous changes. A new enthusiasm seemed to enter the heart of humanity; a wider belief, a more fervent zeal, a nobler conception of man and his God. Science and Democracy compelled social and religious changes that caused the world to progress by leaps and bounds. The nations came to know one another as never before; the comforts of life reached the masses in a manner never seen in previous eras; the luxuries of the past became the necessities of the day.

But with these advances appeared many dangerous tendencies. Science shook the very foundations of creeds, and compelled them to rebuild or fall in ruins. The broadening of educational advantages granted more

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thought to the masses, and the result was a demand for rights that shook the social structure of the nations. The invention of machinery, while making food, clothing, and numerous necessities much more plentiful, made different classes of laborers far more dependent upon one another, and the sufferings of the one class affected all others. The inevitable result was a fervent recognition of the brotherhood existing among workers and a realization of their vast power in the affairs of the world. Never, therefore, has man in any other age seen such tremendous labor agitations, such startling social upheavals, such dangerous abruptness of change as in the nineteenth century.

The fiction, the essay, the poetry of the century, of course, reflected these momentous facts. In the early days of the period poetry was the medium of expression, and the poets cried out in a voice of revolution seldom excelled in any literature of any other day. Toward the middle of the century the essay and the novel seem to have rivaled each other in expressing the desires of vexed humanity; while in the later years of the century the novel far surpassed the poem and the essay in bringing home to the people the vital problems of humanity.

Of course, under such strenuous conditions, fiction could not remain purely romantic. The picture of actual, modern-day life was demanded; the sufferings, longings, and ambitions of the under classes cried for expression; the pretensions and wrongs of social distinctions had to be exposed. It was a challenge to the realist, and he answered it. True, one of the first writers of the century, and perhaps the most famous of them all, Sir Walter Scott, was a romanticist; but on

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the other hand it is significant that the very *first* novelist of fame in the century, Jane Austen, was a realist pure and simple. In her footsteps came a host of photographic observers, some of whom laid bare the social body with cold impersonality, and others with bitterness and anguish.

JANE AUSTEN

It requires genuine genius to make the commonplace interesting. Jane Austen (1775–1817), possessing just such genius, did more; she showed the superlative importance of the commonplace. We all have heard Scott's hearty praise of her work: "The big bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary, commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me." This is a true criticism. Hers is the calm, attentive, delicate work of a diamond cutter. With keen photographic observation she put before the English people their own undeniably "average" middle classes with all their adoration for the conventional, their primness, their divine belief in blue blood, their veneration for tradition. No violent upheavals enter into these pictures of rural life; scarcely ever is there any height of passion; the plots progress with a quietness eminently befitting the quiet souls that move so primly through them. This is indeed the beginning of nineteenth-century English realism.

Jane Austen's father was a clergyman in Southern England, and her view of the world scarcely ever went beyond the narrow confines of that section. She knew

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little of the larger movements and wilder excitements of the life of city or Continent; she herself was so modest and retiring as to object to having her name on the title pages of her books; the greed for gain was so utterly absent from her nature that she was satisfied with exceedingly small payments; altogether extremeness in anything—except modesty—seems to have been disgusting to her. Perhaps, after all, her greatest message to the nineteenth century is the message of *common sense*. That she belongs to the century at all is due to her lack of that very impulsiveness and haste which was so characteristic of the period; for her books, written years before their publication, belong, properly, to the period closing with 1800. *Pride and Prejudice*, published in 1813, was written probably in 1796; *Sense and Sensibility*, appearing in 1811, was written in 1797; *Northanger Abbey*, printed in 1817, was written as early as 1798. But we must date a novel's influence from the day of its appearance in type, and the influence of Jane Austen's work belongs distinctly to the nineteenth century.

The novelists of the century may be pretty clearly divided into romanticists and realists. Scott undoubtedly fathered the former, and Jane Austen "mothered" the latter. Her *Northanger Abbey* is a mild protest, almost in the form of a burlesque, against the romantic fiction of her young days—the fiction of the Gothic type. Catherine Morland, the heroine, is simply an average girl who, after reading many weird accounts of ghostly, romantic castles, goes on a visit to Northanger Abbey, which, to her disappointment, she finds a very pleasant and convenient home. There is a delicate, subtle, and

quiet irony in such a story—an irony that is present in almost every page of Jane Austen's work. She may have felt as keenly as Charles Dickens; but restraint was bred in her blood, and both his broad, bitter portrayals and Scott's huge sympathy were foreign to her well-schooled nature.

Sense and Sensibility is just as quietly ironical. Of the two sisters dealt with in this story, one is thoroughly sane and guided by sensible reflections; the other fondles pain and misery, and possesses all that "romantic temperament" so characteristic of Gothic heroines. And lo! Jane Austen thoroughly cures her by causing her to be jilted and then marries her off to a man old enough to be her father. Casting aside the hysterics of the later eighteenth-century novelists, abjuring the lengthy moralizing of Richardson, despising the open coarseness of Smollett and the dirty suggestiveness of Sterne, this author, telling of nothing wonderful, and describing people that might be seen along any byway, became, nevertheless, a social critic of such astuteness that her equals in the succeeding hundred years have been but rarely found.

Of course intensity of action is not to be expected; indeed to many readers intensity of interest is lacking. To those, however, who read between the lines there is revealed a story of the inner life told by means of the outer manners. Here are people tyrannized by respectability. They have the happy faculty of having nothing to do. With some little money and some quantity of thin "blue blood," they dare not undertake the original, but spend their days in drinking weak tea, going to church, and sewing for the poor, whom, fortunately, they

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have with them always. Scarcely ever do they deviate into crime and misery; when perchance they do, their villainy is quickly covered over and silenced lest a stain be placed upon the "respectability" of the family name. Certain British middle-class ideals are upheld with quiet but persistent reverence: a woman ought to marry a man with an income; nobody should let a hobby run away with him; the upper classes should not become so lazy as to neglect their estates; train the young for a certain rank, and they will be happy in it; let every man or woman attend to his or her own business.

With a touch of sarcasm, with an almost perfect technique, with a smooth and never turbulent art, these lessons are impressed—but never pressed—upon the reader. Some of Scott's novels bear a resemblance to the huge tragedies of Shakespeare; Jane Austen's stories of social manners easily lend themselves to a comparison with some of the lighter comedies of the great master. This woman pioneer in realism may bring a couple together, create misunderstandings between them, arouse in them a positive dislike for each other, and then, at the proper moment, bring them together again for the disillusioning, the gradual destruction of prejudice, and the growth of mutual understanding, admiration, and love. Such a course of events requires for adequate exposition a genius for analysis and introspection. It is doubtful whether any other English novelist before her day, with the possible exception of Richardson, equaled her in such genius. To some readers it all may seem like describing an anthill with laborious minuteness; it may seem, too, that all the poetry and romance of life are brushed aside in such

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a process; this sticking so closely to the common rounds of daily life may seem at times positively earthy. More than traces of these taints may be found in the work of Jane Austen. Her dry, caustic irony oftentimes conceals what might have been romance. She does not often touch the sublime and the beautiful. She does shut out much of heaven with a little earth. But, then, art, if it desires, has a perfect right to show the truth, the unvarnished truth, and nothing but the truth, and this right Jane Austen has chosen to assume.

There is a certain inevitableness about much of her fiction. Indeed we can almost discern a fixed formula. If A meets B under certain conditions A and B will apparently not agree; but if A and B meet after certain changes A and B will agree and fall in love. Miss Austen manipulates the environments, and the characters do the rest. After all, how vivid these characters become, and with how few descriptive touches! They drink tea and play cards and go to church and meet at receptions and talk—talk a great deal—and in a short time we come to know them intimately. They are not pushed upon us; they grow gradually into our ken. Scott, Dickens, and even George Eliot often awkwardly shove their new figures into our company; Jane Austen comes much closer to the French conception of allowing these beings to grow before us and show themselves through themselves.

In her later works, *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), and *Persuasion* (1818), we find a deeper tone, more moralizing and reflections on the mysteries of life, more noting of the effect of scenery, more introductions of outside characters brought forward simply for the

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sake of making the picture more lifelike. In short, her view of life was slowly broadening; her inbred restraint was breaking down. But had she lived a hundred years, and had she written scores of novels, she could not have set herself free from that early training, modesty, aristocratic reserve, and slightly condescending cynicism.

As has been intimated, conversation is a most convenient vehicle for her plots. Every conversation throws some new ray of light on a character or a situation, and almost without our notice, affairs move right along. Her style exhibits the sort of skill expected of such a woman. Word economy—a sort of economy unknown to eighteenth-century novelists—gives her sentences a precision and a snap not to be found in Scott. Again, unlike Richardson, Fielding, Scott, and Dickens, she refuses to be tempted aside for long by any call to preach, philosophize, or grow sentimental over scenery or old-time customs. She is as much afraid of the violently pathetic as of the boisterously humorous. Like a true realist, she calculates with nicety the true valuation and effect of every item, and with her, exaggeration is impossible.

What did this remarkable woman teach the novelists of her century? She showed more emphatically than any other writer since Richardson the potential importance of the passing thought, the barely suggested hint, the petty deed. She displayed a masterly power in revealing the inner being by the every-day doings of the outer being. She set forth clearly the theory that the realist, by his very truthfulness, becomes something of a social critic. She attacked petty prejudice, artificial distinctions, the tyranny of tradition, the selfish-

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ness of certain types of humanity, and the worldliness of others, with a mild irony fully as irritating as the bold pictures of Dickens or the keen satire of Thackeray. She lacked what all realists are in danger of lacking—a comprehension of the poetry that actually exists amidst the sordidness of humanity, and which, after all, redeems life and keeps the soul sweet and sane.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

It is popular to-day to exercise a bit of condescension towards Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832)—especially on the part of those whose hobby is psychology. It is very true that Scott deals but sparingly in this modern science; his forte is strong, vigorous, healthy, normal, physical life—the sort of life that exists only through morality, and doubtless he would have considered some of our modern psychological problem-fiction nothing short of scandalous. Undoubtedly he had various other defects as a literary artist. Indeed, at some time or other he may have broken every canon of literary art. His characters come upon us abruptly; he describes them instead of letting them describe themselves. He succumbs to the dangerous temptation of stopping to talk about all sorts of extraneous matters. He handles so many characters that he even forgets he has killed some of them, and nonchalantly brings them back to carry on further adventures. However, some of the characters of modern fiction are dead from the beginning, and neither they nor their authors have “psychology” enough to discover it. Scott himself admitted various other weaknesses. He confessed that he could not build his stories to a graduated scale and

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allow them to evolve smoothly and logically. Many of his scenes are indeed "unlabored" and "loosely put together." As he himself says, he has a habit of "huddling up" his conclusions. In style he is at times positively incorrect in both grammar and rhetoric. These taints, it would seem, should damn any author for time and eternity.

What, then, makes him survive? The reasons for his survival are far more numerous than the reasons for his literary death. His spontaneity is exhilarating. His characters may oftentimes be simply strong, healthy youngsters, and the stories may frequently carry them along, and not they the stories. But despite this lack of subtlety, his own vigorous interest is infectious. By means of sheer virility he compels us to follow him in hot and hasty pursuit. This is all the more remarkable when we consider the diffuseness of his work. Every living mortal has innumerable strings of attachment to the life about him; even his cook and his tailor influence his character. It is far wiser, therefore, in telling his story, to set him free from all but the most important attachments, and view him as influenced by particular tendencies in his environment. This Scott does not always do, and the result is huge and sometimes confused pictures of life. And yet, amidst a multitude of actions and currents of life, he carries us along with remarkable intensity, and causes the hero's career to be almost a matter of life and death with us.

Human nature and virility—these are two saving graces in Scott's novels. His knowledge of the past and his knowledge of the men walking the Scottish borders with him, give him the tone of one who is as-

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sured of his facts, and this, assuredly, adds to the comfort of the reader. Few men, moreover, either as authors or men, have been more frank and lovable. Few have held before their readers such noble ideals of real manhood. His pictures of life and his portrayal of historical figures may not be altogether correct—extreme accuracy is neither to be expected nor desired—but that he creates the proper *atmosphere* can scarcely be doubted. Many a man has gained a better conception of the evolution of British life from his Shakespeare and Scott than from any number of accurately written treatises on history. *Old Mortality* (1816), dealing with the Covenanters, *Woodstock* (1826), illustrating the difference between the Cavalier and the Puritan, *Ivanhoe* (1820), portraying the days of Richard I, doubtless could not endure the microscopic investigations of the specialist; but surely they show with admirable impressiveness the larger spirit of the times with which they deal.

Scott admired and loved the clash of life, the fair, open, vigorous fight, whether between individuals or social classes. And since few men of the nineteenth century have possessed a more intimate knowledge of a multitude of social planes, the result is a vast array of material with which to work—magic, feuds, Scotch home life, chivalry, duels, courtships, feasts, religious controversies, forest life, roadside traditions, superstitions, what not. Before his day Scotland was very little known; since his day it has been a charmed land.

It has been declared that Scott set back realism a half-century; but this doubtless is an exaggerated statement. He mingled weirdness, realism, romanti-

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cism, the sordid, the ideal, anything that served his purpose. He drew upon superstition, criminology, the picaresque, the Gothic; he used the ghosts in the tumbled-down castles, the spirits of the hills, the demons of the forests; he seemingly laughed theories and formulators of theories to scorn. In the creation of his characters he is either realistic or romantic as the theme or setting requires. As a general rule, in dealing with the lower classes, he is realistic; but when dealing with the upper classes he oftentimes allows his romantic temperament to run away with him. Some of his creatures are decidedly realistic personifications of Scotch fanaticism; others, such as Fergus MacIvor and his sister Flora, are idealistic personifications of the higher traits of the national life. His bandits are scarcely ever the seventeenth-century importations from Spain and Italy, but are simply average or below-average men, hiding in the mountain fastnesses or frequenting the low seamen's resorts. Many of his figures are of the conventional sort—brave, strong lovers, or beautiful, tender women.

It is not, therefore, a just criticism to consider Scott as an enemy of realism and an unswerving devotee of romanticism. He was a lover of the old and far off, and undoubtedly he idealized some phases of the past—but by no means all. With a few historical characters in the background, and his own imaginary figures at the front of the stage, he could create a fascinating atmosphere in which his invented creatures move with verisimilitude.

Taine, it would seem, has somewhat missed the mark when he says of this very matter of Scott's use of the

spirit of an age: "Costumes, scenery, externals alone are exact; actions, speech, sentiments, all the rest is civilized, embellished, arranged in modern guise." Surely *Ivanhoe*, *Old Mortality*, *The Talisman*, a score of others, have captured something of the "actions" and "sentiment," if nothing else, of a past long since dead. Such ever-famous scenes as the tournament in *Ivanhoe*, when the Disinherited Knight overcomes all adversaries, and the sword scene in *The Talisman*, where Richard's mighty blade is tested beside the Saladin's slender scimitar—such scenes retain their fame because, better than many tomes of history, they apparently have captured the *spirit* of an epoch. Scott had a keen eye for those effective combinations or contrasts that could present vividly the conflict between two opposing forces, parties, or races. That sword scene in the Saladin's tent and that tournament where Anglo-Saxon and Norman burn with jealousy have their value as sociological studies as well as for their rare descriptive art.

Taine, perhaps truly, says of Scott's characters: "Select heroines . . . always touching but above all correct; young gentlemen, Evandale, Morton, Ivanhoe, irreproachably brought up, tender and grave, even slightly melancholic . . . and worthy to lead them to the altar. Is there a man more suited than the author to compose such a spectacle? He is a good Protestant, a good husband, a good father, very moral, so decided a Tory that he carries off as a relic a glass from which the king has just drunk. In addition he has neither talent nor leisure to reach the depth of his characters." This Frenchman should have remembered, however, that the British of the nineteenth century de-

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manded morality in their heroes and heroines; that the Anglo-Saxons have always demanded that their art and literature contribute to the moral welfare of mankind; and that Scott, rather fortunately, chose to answer this demand. Of course, this of necessity made his pictures of the past incomplete in so far as they were mainly idealistic; no author in these days could afford to revive the vulgarity, the sins of the flesh, the deep injustice, the ferocious cruelty of the centuries that are gone. All critics must admit, however, that Scott did not "reach the depth of his characters." *Ivanhoe* might desire Rebecca rather than Rowena; but the process of his reasoning and the distress through which he might have gone to reach a conquest over this desire are matters overlooked by Scott. Doubtless, deep in his heart, Scott considered the story itself much more interesting than the characters around which it moved.

As Masson has pointed out,¹ the one Scotch trait thoroughly lacking in this novelist was the metaphysical. He was neither speculative nor philosophical. This forever prevented him from portraying such master souls as Shakespeare has created in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. We could tell most clearly what his heroes looked like; we could recognize them among millions; but the "inner man" is not revealed. This may also be the reason why he was never highly successful in presenting a thoroughly convincing picture of a great historical personage. Where he does succeed, undeniably, is in the more difficult and more important picturing of the general soul of an age or of a people; in short, in the excellence of his "social pictures." "From Ivan-

¹ *British Novelists*, p. 207.

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hoe to Edie Ochiltree, from Lucy Ashton to Jeanie Deans, from the knightly achievements of the Crusade to the humours of the Scottish peasantry—this is the panorama he reveals, and he casts over it the light of his generous, gentle, and delicate nature.”² Yet, let us not gain the impression that these character portrayals are false because not deep. What a gathering of figures in this mass of romance—hundreds of them! Meg Merillies, Dominie Sampson, the Antiquary, Madge Wildfire, Effie Deans, Jeanie—if all might be placed before us in one jostling, rough, hearty, shrewd, “cannie” crowd, we should be impelled to exclaim, “This is indeed Scotland!”

Scott’s novels are great in general grasp and vision and not in detail. He was verbose and tautologous; he so loved the mere telling of the story that he preferred to linger over the picture of the hero or event rather than to write the all-embracing adjective. Yet diffuse as he may be, his plots, vast in their material, move steadily onward. Note this in the *Heart of Midlothian*. The riot, the passion of the Edinburgh multitude, the stir and bustle of a momentous hour in a great city,—these are put before us; episode after episode is presented with astonishing vigor—episodes that almost appear to have been written for their own power of arousing interest in themselves—and yet through it all Scott centers our attention on Effie Deans, and not once may we declare the plot clogged. This book alone would prove Scott’s masterly grasp over a mass of material and an array of actors that might well dismay the best of our more artistic modern novelists.

² Raleigh: *English Novel*, p. 283.

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The plot of this work, as of the others, falls short, of course, of being ideal. Scott is not satisfied with reaching a climax; he must go on for pure joy of creating. After the thirty-seventh chapter, when Jeanie Deans obtains favor with the queen, our interest in the plot itself may begin to decrease; but our interest in the remaining pictures is by no means ended. Scott knew that he had a leisurely audience; it enjoyed the sustained characterization of those concluding chapters; above all else, it found interest in those vivid pictures of ancient days. And who, except the critic who cannot forget for a moment the rhetorical rules of unity and coherence, does not yet find the same interest and pleasure? Here, in this fine blending of the poet and the historian, is love of the old for its own sake. A few years before Scott's time Johnson had declared any man a fool who wrote from any other motive than money-making; Scott would have written of the antique had never a penny resulted. His chief joy seemed to be to repeat, to relate, to revive the past. Concerning that love for the ancient, hear his own words:

"But show me an old castle or a field of battle, and I was at home at once, filled it with its combatants in their proper costume, and overwhelmed my hearers by the enthusiasm of my description. In crossing Magus Moor, near St. Andrews, the spirit moved me to give a picture of the assassination of the Archbishop of St. Andrews to some fellow-travelers, . . . and one of them, though well acquainted with the story, protested my narrative had frightened away his night's sleep."³

Unlike many British of his own day and ours, he

³ Lockhart's *Life*; *Autobiography*, I, p. 62.

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could imagine that there might possibly be some other age, people, or code of life and ethics better than those of Britain in his own time. He therefore steeped his imagination in the atmosphere of other days and other scenes in a manner imitated with but great difficulty and small success by many of his fellow writers.

With the coming of the Romantic Movement, there came also a contest between prose fiction and poetry. Poetry might well claim the realm of romance; it might well claim "the light that never was on land or sea." But prose fiction won because it might dare to do that which would have destroyed the poetic atmosphere of poetry: the mingling of humor and intense realism with the loftiest romantic themes. Set that valiant tournament scene of *Ivanhoe* beside the fish-market scene in *The Antiquary*; such a contrast would be impossible in a volume of true poetry. Thus Scott, when he gave up the song and ballad for the less artistic prose tale, enlarged his freedom and gave his genius the power to portray with equal truth the homely and the ideal.

What, then, were the effects of that long series of prose tales beginning in 1814 and ending in 1831? By his wholesomeness Scott gave the English novel a respectability it had never enjoyed before. He scarcely ever thrust morality upon his readers; but his clean, strong men and fair, virtuous women were strong arguments for righteousness through their ideal manhood and womanhood. He had equals in character-making, and numerous superiors in plot construction; but very few writers of English fiction have surpassed him in the maintenance of an all-round high standard and an absorbing interest. In style he lacked the artistic and

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subtle touches so emphasized in the later years of the nineteenth century; but he wrote with a vim, a sweep, and a rush that have not yet forfeited the admiration of the critics. In his truthfulness to Scottish life and spirit, he made local color so important that few novelists, since his day, have dared neglect it. He manipulated a host of figures over a vast field with such assurance and daring that those who look closely into the matter can but wonder that he made so few mistakes. Finally, he made the past live again; he made history a matter of absorbing interest; he converted the scenes and deeds of a nation's records into a veritable dreamland, tinted with the glamour of beautiful romance.

SCOTT'S DISCIPLES

Such a strong personality as that of Scott could not but influence a great number of observers and creative writers. In his own country, Scotland, his spirit may be seen in such works as John Galt's *Annals of the Parish*, Wilson's *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life*, and possibly Jane Porter's novels. In America Cooper, Simms, Kennedy, Paulding, and Charles Brockden Brown show themselves his disciples. In Germany we find Häring's *Walladmor* (1824), nothing more nor less than a Waverley novel with German touches; Freytag openly acknowledges his indebtedness; while Georg Ebers was under no necessity of a public acknowledgment. In France, where we should expect Scott's mistakes to be noticed most clearly, we find Alfred de Vigny copying his manner in *Cinq-Mars* (1826), Prosper Mérimée using the same general form in his *La*

Chronique du Règne de Charles IX (1829), and Victor Hugo using many a trait of Scott's in *Notre Dame* (1830). Even in Italy Manzoni's *The Betrothed* (1824) proves the potency of the border minstrel's original way of using mystery, sweeping action, native manners, and strong, broad characterization.

The English followers of Scott—at a distance—are of course innumerable. Mrs. Anna Bray's *The Protestant* (1828) is an early example, while her *Fitz of Fitzford*, *Trelawney of Trelawne*, and *Hartland Forest*, dealing with the life of Devon and Cornwall, are still better examples of fiction specialized to a particular section. Horace Smith's *Brambletye House* (1826), *Oliver Cromwell*, and *Arthur Arundel*, while written in a prose exceedingly dull at times, contain some vivid pictures of the Cavaliers in Cromwell's days. G. P. R. James, author of more than one hundred pieces of fiction, was clearly under the direct influence of Scott; but he lacked the minstrel's glamour of romance, and would be almost totally forgotten had not Thackeray's burlesque on his *Richelieu* (1829) given him some doubtful fame. William Harrison Ainsworth in such works as *Rookwood* (1834) and *Jack Shepard* (1839) goes beyond Scott in the use of crimes, and almost returns to the Gothic terrors in his descriptions of the thoughts and emotions of the condemned. He has Scott's passion for wild adventures, and one of these, Dick Turpin's wild ride from London to York with the reins in his teeth and a pistol in each hand, is not likely to sink into complete obscurity. In such stories as *The Tower of London*, *Old Saint Paul's*, and *Windsor Castle*, Ainsworth takes as the center or goal of his story some great

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event like the London Fire or the Plague, and weaves about it a melodramatic chronicle of crime or weirdness. In the later years of the century Robert Louis Stevenson seemed in many ways a re-created Scott; while even in the twentieth century Hall Caine has poured forth a turbulent stream of fiction, having undoubtedly a source in the work of Scott, but far more passionate and lacking in the noble humanity of the Waverley stories.

Thus, through a hundred years this lover of the Scottish life and song has made his influence felt. The immense vigor thrown into his works, the vividness with which he felt and saw his characters' emotions and deeds, the coloring of old, far-off events, the persistent victories of the nobler attributes of mankind, the sweep and virility of his plots—these traits doubtless are the main causes of his permanent popularity, and may be the incentives for future masters of romance. Just now there is a tendency for all novelists to be painstaking photographers, but the dreamers of the good, the beautiful, the ideal have by no means passed away.

BULWER-LYTTON

Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton (1803–1873), is another novelist undoubtedly influenced by the great Sir Walter; but Bulwer-Lytton was such a literary weathercock that he could not long abide the disciple of any one great master. Few men in English literature undertook so many kinds of writing with so much success, and no other English novelist has ever attempted so many widely different types of fiction. He constantly had his finger close to the British literary pulse, and the varying tastes of the reading public promptly brought

the proper changes in his output. In his early novel, *Pelham* (1828), he created a brilliant society story; in *Paul Clifford* (1830) he produced a melodramatic tale of criminal life; in *Pilgrims of the Rhine* (1834) he wrote a dainty fairy story; in such books as *Rienzi* (1835), *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), *Harold* (1848), and *The Last of the Barons* (1843), he displayed his power in precise historical romances. In *Ernest Maltravers* he attempted with some success an analysis of social questions of his day; in *The Caxtons* (1849) and its continuation *My Novel* (1853), he wrote skilful imitations of Sterne; in *The Coming Race* (1871) he used the new science and the new thought of his time, just as Edward Bellamy did seventeen years later in his *Looking Backward*, to prophesy the goal of the present tendencies of civilization; in *Pausanias* (1876) and *Kenelm Chillingly* he endeavored to make clear the effect of national institutions and environments upon the individual.

It required a man with an immense knowledge of life to produce such a variety of fiction. Bulwer-Lytton possessed such a knowledge, and with it the perseverance and accuracy of a zealous student, remarkable inventive powers, a sense of humor, and a most facile pen. Critics have scoffed at his pretensions, and have sometimes refused him a place among the greater novelists of the century; but it must be admitted that he created some characters that seem destined to live, some new and intensely dramatic scenes and situations, and a number of descriptions not frequently equaled and seldom surpassed in our language. That he is sometimes overcome by his vast array of historical facts and

crowds his canvas with too many incidents is apparent to any one who has read *The Last of the Barons*; but, on the other hand, *Harold*, *Rienzi*, and *The Last Days of Pompeii* leave an impression of reality which only a masterly pen could produce. And whether or not the picture be overcrowded, it is vivid in its coloring and abounding with life.

The formula upon which these historical romances are based is sufficiently apparent. Bulwer-Lytton generally shows some great crisis or momentous turning point in the world's history, and presents in much detail the events leading up to the social or civic upheaval. *The Last Days of Pompeii* is a conspicuous example of the process. Here, however, he developed an admirable story under great difficulties; for, having gathered a multitude of facts, and having undeniably gained the atmosphere, he could find no historical characters to place in the scene, and was under the necessity of creating figures that appeared to fit the situation and the environment. Nydia, the blind girl, should be sufficient proof of his success. These historical tales, as well as several of his other works, are in reality dramas with comments, and the scenes there described might easily be staged; they are in some phases too plainly theatrical. In spite of their vividness and wonderful pictures these stories of the past have not quite that romance which has made Scott's work beloved. Bulwer-Lytton looked at history more often from the philosopher's standpoint; his books contain studies in culture and national motives; Scott dealt more frequently with those larger traits found universally in man.

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It has been indicated that Bulwer-Lytton passed from master to master. Jane Austen may have given suggestions for his society stories; Scott and Jane Porter made the path clear for his historical romances; Sterne was a little too plainly his teacher in *The Caxtons* and *My Novel*. Here we are introduced to old English village life; here we meet an old captain, plainly a descendant of Uncle Toby; here, too, is the man like Mr. Shandy, dealing in abstruse theories. A lame duck, a moth nearly killed by going too near the fire, and a dilapidated donkey are brought forward to lay claim to our sympathy. The fantastic style and the playing with ideas and words complete the imitation.

But whatever this author attempted he did surprisingly well. Reviving the old type of Gothic romance, he brought out the nobler and more poetic qualities latent in it. *Pilgrims of the Rhine* is a dainty conception of the meeting and love-making of English and German fairies. *Zanoni* (1842) using the old theme of the Rosicrucians, a belief in spiritual beings who impart the secrets of the universe to the pure, tells the story of such a man, who, after marrying an opera girl, loses his knowledge and power, and is killed in the Reign of Terror. Surely Bulwer-Lytton saw the possibilities of greatness and high nobility in every theme, and strove zealously to evolve such qualities.

Why, then, has his work shown so little promise of permanence? In the first place, he made himself a victim of ridicule in his earlier days by his affectations and somewhat pompous style. In the second place, even when these defects were partially remedied in his later work, he remained entirely too rhetorical. Again, he

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was entirely too much interested in the historical, social, or ethical lesson which he desired his novel to teach. He possessed genuine creative power in both plot and character; but he limited this power in his efforts to make these two elements fit the lesson or ethical rule to be thrust home. Like Scott, he often refused to allow his characters to reveal themselves, but insisted upon describing them himself. Lastly, that intense personality, which Sidney Lanier declares the crowning virtue of modern literature, and which made Scott and Dickens masters in spite of their defects, was not his. And yet, *Rienzi* and *The Last Days of Pompeii* are likely to retain readers for centuries to come. For Bulwer-Lytton, if not an author possessing personal magnetism, at least saw vividly and compelled, by his accuracy and painstaking zeal, the same vivid realization on the part of his readers.

GOTHIC REVIVALS

It is interesting to see how often the weird form of the Gothic romance revived and fitted itself into the advancing conceptions of the mysterious. We have noticed how Bulwer-Lytton refined it and brought out so successfully a number of its daintier and nobler qualities. As the nineteenth century progressed the type became more specialized in the detective story and the tale of pure terror. It seemed to have a fascination for many widely different kinds of intellect. In 1829 a volume entitled *Colloquies on Society*, containing the talks of Sir Thomas More's ghost to Robert Southey, attracted much attention. Mrs. Shelley's monstrous *Frankenstein* seems to have startled half of Europe.

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She and her husband and Byron, while spending a rainy week at Lake Geneva, whiled away their time inventing ghost stories, and this highly imaginative woman conceived the idea of having a medical student construct a man-like monster from materials gathered from tombs and dissecting rooms. The creature comes to life, wreaks vengeance upon the student and others, and at length ends its strenuous existence in the North Sea. This was indeed running Gothicism to an extreme. In 1820 Charles Maturin, an Irishman, made some improvements on the type by using terror openly and frankly in his *Melmoth*, *The Wanderer*, where we are shown two lovers captive in a dungeon, slowly driven by starvation and loneliness to madness and death. Poe himself could scarcely have excelled this theme in gruesomeness. Wilkie Collins, a genuine genius in plot construction, exemplified in his *Woman in White* and *Moonstone* a more intricate and ingenious turn of the Gothic. Perhaps the most pleasant turn the Gothic ever took is to be found in *Alice in Wonderland*, where the merging of the real with the unreal produces the very experiences most often met with in dreams. There is in human nature a secret or open desire to know the details of the horrible, or to wander into the mysterious regions that border on death, and as long as this tendency exists, we may expect to find the Gothic revive now and again in modified but no less weird forms.

As life and society become more and more complex, fiction must necessarily display more varied and distinct types. Particularly has this been exemplified in the nineteenth century. Indeed it would be confusing, if not almost impossible, to dwell in detail upon the

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theories, customs, hobbies, scientific ideas, creeds, dogmas, and philosophies for which fiction has been used in the past hundred years. Every class of society has contributed not only material but authors, and no type of human life has been without its interpreters to express its own peculiar view of existence, and its purposes and goals. Let us but glance at a few of these interpretations in the earlier years of the century.

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We have noticed elsewhere Miss Edgeworth's pleasant and interesting pictures of Irish life; such work was of course destined to tempt imitators. William Carleton's *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, very serious and realistic at times, further revealed to the English people the trials and pathos of their Celtic neighbors. Samuel Lover in such fiction as *Handy Andy* (1842) brought out even more vividly the broad Irish humor. Miss Sidney Owenson wept and moaned over her Celtic folk. Thomas Croker's *Last of the Irish Sarpints*, and Charles Lever's dashing novels, such as *Charles O'Malley*, *The Irish Dragoon*, and *Tom Burke of Ours* would easily counteract any tendency to look upon Erin as the land of tears; while the stories of Justin McCarthy, Lady Morgan, and T. C. Grattan would completely demolish such an idea.

WAR AND SEA FICTION

The soldier and sailor life of Great Britain has long been a favorite theme with English writers, and the nineteenth century saw a deluge of such fiction. Frederick Marryat, who himself had been a naval officer,

harked back to the Smollett type, and in *Peter Simple* (1834) and *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (1836) produced a deal of hearty fun mingled with some decidedly improbable sea tales, such as those by Captain Kearney, who simply couldn't tell the truth, and whose tombstone bore the appropriate epitaph: "Here *lies* Captain Kearney." W. H. Maxwell, an Irishman, author of *Stories of Waterloo* (1834), taking as his themes "wars and rumors of war," generally took his English soldiers to some wild portion of Ireland, and then transported them to the Continent to take a thrilling part in the Battle of Waterloo, or some such dread combat. Waterloo was a veritable "rock in the wilderness" for war novelists of the thirties and forties. James Grant, in his *Highlanders in Spain* (1845) has the hero fight in this mighty battle, then returns him to his Scottish lass, and thus gains for the book all the charms of the travel story, the story of manners, the story of adventures, and the love story. It should not be a matter of wonder, therefore, that the fifty or more tales produced by Grant on this formula made the midnight oil burn freely in British homes.

Publishers to this day hold that the "travel" book is a good venture in their business; the array of successful stories of this type in the English language goes far to prove their theory. British novelists of the early century dared to reach beyond Waterloo and Spain for their materials and environments. As early as 1823 James Morier, in his efforts to bring out the weirdness and magic of the Orient, made himself ridiculous in his *Hajji Baba of Ispahan* and fully equaled this first attempt with his *Hajji Baba in England* in 1828. Charles

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Reade's *Never too Late to Mend* contains some vivid pictures of the Australian gold field, and had, therefore, a wide reading. Even in these later years, when the world seems to have become an open book, such works as Hope's *Anastasis*, portraying the evil of Greek and Turkish life, and Kipling's stories of India, prove the permanence of the travel motif among the British readers.

REALISM

Undoubtedly most of these works were honest attempts in realism. Their authors faithfully endeavored to show life as they thought it was in the particular spheres under observation. Realism, as we have seen, is no doubt as native as romanticism to the British; we have seen it to some extent in Greene and Defoe, and any number of eighteenth-century writers, and Jane Austen gave it a healthy impetus at the beginning of the new century. Even Scott's immense vogue could not crush it. Several of his Scottish contemporaries chose to portray the life of their own day, rather than that of a dim and idealized past. Susan Ferrier, for instance, a personal friend of his, wrote some surprisingly realistic work in her *Marriage* (1818), *The Inheritance* (1824), and *Destiny* (1831). In *Marriage* we become acquainted with a fashionable English girl (with three beloved dogs) who marries a Scotchman and goes to his Highland home where she meets his prim and quaint sisters and aunts. The humor of some of the situations may easily be imagined.

John Galt, in his *Ayrshire Legatees* (1820), attempts very much the same sort of humorous realism. Here

we have the letters of an Ayrshire preacher and his family to his friends, and their descriptions of London sights are such as we should expect from "Uncle Josh" of to-day. Again, in *Annals of the Parish* (1821) an Ayrshire minister tells his experiences in his long service as pastor in the little village. His account of his three successive wives, of the religious and industrial changes in the community, and of the brave widow, Mrs. Malcolm, who rears her family in sobriety and godliness, and who sees her daughter married happily, and her son killed fighting the French, become matters of genuine interest to all who read. Indeed this is the very same sort of work that Ian Maclaren developed so beautifully; both showed the lights and shadows of the Scotland that they knew and loved so well. Dr. David Moir, with the help of Galt, wrote a book of similar pathetic and humorous charm in his *Mansie Wauch* (1828). The apprentice who comes out of the Lammermoor hills to work in the town, and who, pining away for his native land, dies on the road back to the beloved valleys, is a figure of true, pathetic interest, and one not easily cast from the memory of the reader.

In England the same realism was highly popular. The humor of Jane Austen was a trifle too difficult in its subtle refinement for most of her English disciples to imitate; but Mary Mitford in *Our Village* (1824-1832), Harriet Martineau in *Five Years of Youth, or Sense and Sentiment* (1831), E. S. Barrett in *Adventures of Cherubina* (1813), Richard Barham in *Ingoldsby Legends*, and Dinah Mulock in *The Ogilvies* and *John Halifax*, followed with some success her mingling of quiet realism, half-hidden irony, and pictures of domestic circles.

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The novel of manners is successful only when certain traits in it are not confined to the limited section under discussion, but are, on the contrary, readily appreciated for their universality. The works just mentioned possess the charm of just such universal traits; but some of the attempts of the day at pictures of English aristocratic life—a legitimate theme when based on actual knowledge—were as absurd and as dangerous morally as some of the “criminal” novels of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. So, too, the novel of purpose which was being exploited by Bulwer-Lytton was another type extremely liable to failure among the host of would-be novelists of the first fifty years of the period. Intense interest in either plot or character is necessary to counteract the tendency to state the theory or hobby too baldly; the appearance of fanaticism ruins a story as a *story*; the plot must set forth some of the larger general interests of life along with its specialized theme. Bulwer-Lytton and, later, Charles Dickens had the genius to combine these essentials; but what a multitude of ambitious, but now forgotten novelists of those early days failed utterly to produce a work that would live in spite of its theories!

BENJAMIN DISRAELI

We have seen how closely Bulwer-Lytton held his finger on the British literary pulse, and how quickly he responded to the fiction demands of his public. At the same time there was writing another novelist who watched his public just as closely, but for political, rather than literary, purposes. This was the brilliant Jew, Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881). Bulwer-Lytton

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has been criticized by some students for his supposed lack of pronounced personality; no one has ever accused Benjamin Disraeli of such a defect. There was one man from whom he could never get away very far—and that was Disraeli. From his first novel, *Vivian Grey* (1826), written when he was twenty-one, to *Endymion* (1880) written when he was seventy-five, he could never resist the temptation to make his work autobiographical. In *Vivian Grey* we find Mrs. Lorraine saying to the hero, "Shrined in the secret chamber of your soul there is an image before which you bow down in adoration, and that image is yourself"; and this first of his fictions is in many ways but a chronicle of his own political hopes and ambitions.

Indeed, like Lord Byron, Disraeli seemed always to base his stories on himself or some other equally concrete personage about him. To those acquainted with English and Continental history it is no difficult task to discover the originals of those figures that parade themselves through his books. *Vivian Grey*, *Tancred*, and *Endymion* are your "humble" servant, Lord Beaconsfield; Julius von Aslingen is Beau Brummel, the famous gentleman of fashion; Mr. Fitzbloom is the equally famous Sir Robert Peel; Lord Monmouth is the infamous Marquis of Hertfordshire, later given lasting infamy as Steyne in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. Mr. Foaming Fudge is Lord Brougham, a founder of the *Edinburgh Review*; Mr. Charlatan Gas is the English Prime Minister, George Canning; Stanislaus Hoax is the widely read English humorist, Theodore Hook, who suggested much to Dickens, and who was used by Thackeray as Mr. Wagg; Mr. Liberal Snake is the Scottish geologist, John

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McCulloch; Mr. Stucco is Mr. Nash, the architect who designed Haymarket; Dr. Masham is Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Winchester, whose glibness of tongue gained him the title of "Soapy Sam"; and Mr. St. Barbe was no other than Thackeray, who had no great love for this brilliant, showy, and somewhat supercilious Jew. It is very evident that Disraeli looked upon the novel as something more than a mere literary instrument; it was a road roller used for crushing his enemies or an engine for smoothing his own pathway to higher political honors.

From the standpoint of technique Disraeli lacks much of being among the masters of English fiction. He possesses a rich and erratic imagination, and this frequently leads him into exaggerations and pictures of Oriental opulence ridiculous to Occidental common sense. His characters almost always possess wealth, vast influence, and surprising brilliance, and are generally as ambitious as—Disraeli. These ladies and gentlemen have no small ability in posing, and have a positive genius for the theatrical. One modern critic puts it well when he says: "He took his reader into wondrous baronial halls, filled with wondrous gems, with wondrous tapestries, with wondrous paintings, and introduced him to wondrous dukes and duchesses, looking out from wondrous dark orbs, and breathing through almond-shaped nostrils."⁴

His plots, almost without exception, are copiously supplied with flaws, to which his undoubted flashes of vivid genius will not wholly blind us. Then, too, those who know the character and the career of Disraeli can not rid themselves of the unpleasant idea that he is

⁴ Tuckerman: *A History of English Prose Fiction*, p. 293.

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constantly talking about himself. In short, these books are the dreams of an inordinately ambitious and almost offensively egotistical man, and not all the brilliancy and the interest in historical characters can wholly compensate for this element.

In two essentials of the novel—characterization and literary style—Disraeli must be acknowledged as of far more than average talent. Even his youthful *Vivian Grey* is admirable in its epigrammatic statements, its vivacity, its vigor, and its audacity. He possessed the faculty of mingling romantic adventures, political realism, and cynical society pictures, and he did it in such a manner as to hold our interest. There is, moreover, a certain piquancy in the audacious, slap-dash, literary criticisms which the assurance of his youth and of his race allowed him to sprinkle throughout the pages.

“‘Poor Washington Irving!’ said Vivian, writing, ‘I knew him well. He always slept at dinner.’”

“‘How delightful! I should have so liked to have seen him! He seems quite forgotten now in England. How came we to talk of him?’”

“‘Forgotten! Oh! he spoilt his elegant talents in writing German and Italian twaddle with the rawness of a Yankee.’”

Contarini Fleming, a “psychological romance” (1832), compelled English and Continental readers to recognize the peculiar genius of the young writer. Beckford, the famous author of *Vathek*, in the early years of the century, and Sir Leslie Stephen, at the close of the century, granted it high praise; while Goethe and Heine thought it displayed great power.

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Like *Vivian Grey*, it lacks a sustained plot; it too frequently reminds one of a loosely connected series of episodes or pictures, each pleasing enough, perhaps, in itself, but not carrying affairs forward to any noticeable degree. Here again we come upon Disraeli's idealized portrait of himself—a boy imaginative, brave, and ambitious, who grows up to become a prominent figure in political life. It is the dream of the young Jew longing for a position of power among the rulers of the land. "My imaginary deeds of conquest," exclaims the hero, "my heroic aspirations, my long-dazzling dreams of fanciful adventure were, perhaps, the sources of ideal action; that stream of eloquent and choice expression that seemed ever flowing in my ear was probably intended to be directed in a different channel than human assemblies, and might melt or kindle the passions of mankind in silence."

The passionate love story, *Henrietta Temple* (1836), is unique among Disraeli's works, in that it may be Disraeli's own love romance, that its characters are fictitious, and that it has a happy ending. Ferdinand Armine, expecting to inherit a fortune from his grandfather, becomes heavily involved in debt, and then is startled into a painful consciousness of the fact by the fortune's being left to his cousin, Katherine Grandison. He becomes engaged to her, but about the same time falls wildly in love with Henrietta Temple, and is soon engaged to her also. The duplicity is discovered; Ferdinand and Henrietta fall ill with brain fever, and Katherine nurses him back to health. Henrietta goes to Italy, and becomes engaged to Lord Montfort. Henrietta and Montfort having re-

turned to England, meet frequently with Ferdinand and Miss Grandison, and fortunately for all concerned, Lord Montfort and Katherine Grandison develop a passion for each other, and Armine is left free to marry Henrietta, whose father, it should be mentioned, had recently become heir to a great fortune. All this may appear very silly to modern readers, and, judging by Disraeli's mocking tone, he must have had the same opinion; but the reading public of the thirties and forties was quite captivated by the romance.

In 1844, with the publication of *Coningsby*, Disraeli's work developed a somewhat deeper tendency. This book and its successors, *Sybil* and *Tancred*, supposedly written to aid the "Young England" party, are really strong pieces of political fiction; but still the inevitable Disraeli thrusts himself before us, and our confidence in the philanthropic purpose of the stories is lost. Be that as it may, the characters in these books, as in most of his works, are undeniably striking, even if theatrical; while the language, too rhetorical, like Bulwer-Lytton's, is vivid, and at times eloquent.

Tancred appeared in 1847. There was necessarily a pause after this in Disraeli's literary career. He was reaping the harvest of his literary plans, and was compelling homage from a Parliament and a people who a few years before openly despised him. At length, however, after he had supped his fill of the sweets and sour of public service, he returned in 1870 to his first love, and produced *Lothair*. Here, as in its successor, *Endymion* (1880), is the same rather coarse admiration for riches and the attendant luxuries. The furnishings of the "magnificent" mansions scarcely condescend to silks

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and satins; while nectar and ambrosia apparently take the place of wine and cake. Here, too, are the same satires on prominent personages of the day, and the same personal touches which readers had learned to expect in his earlier stories.

A man of positive genius along some lines, brilliant, witty, capable of splendid irony and satire, possessed of a ready and vivacious pen, a portrayer of some virile characters, Disraeli was yet so full of his own personal ambition and so imbued with regard for his own thoughts that he could not see clearly motives and actions unconcerned with his own immediate activities. Then, too, a racial cynicism deterred him from taking the beings of his own creation with that seriousness which made the much less brilliant Jane Austen a moving force in English literature. He stands as a conspicuous example of those defects which thoroughly self-centered individuality inevitably displays.

CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was a man of just as great individuality as Disraeli; but what a minute portion of it was self-centered! True, he expressed with childlike frankness the pleasure he found in the applause and the material rewards that came to him so liberally; but how heartily he entered into the desires and ambitions of mankind, how he suffered with the afflicted, what large sympathy was his! His personality penetrated to the innermost soul, not only of his own people, but of a half score of other nations as well. Surely his understanding of humanity was of a universal character. Few men's names have more often

been upon the lips of English-speaking nations, and none pronounced with more affection. His very defects, clearly recognized as they are in this day, were amiable; his faults leaned toward virtue.

His early training was severe. In boyhood he learned life not so much from books as from bitter experience. In young manhood the clash of city life and the unrelenting demands of poverty were his teachers. His courses in rhetoric and belles-lettres amounted to nothing; he gained the power of expression under conditions that would have bewildered the talents of a lesser genius. Hear his own words: "I have often transcribed for the printer from my shorthand notes important public speeches in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which would have been to a young man severely compromising, writing on the palm of my hand by the light of a dark lantern in a post-chaise and four, galloping through a wild country and through the dead of night, at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour. . . . Returning home from excited political meetings in the country to the waiting press in London, I do verily believe I have been upset in almost every description of vehicle known in this country. I have been in my time belated in miry by-roads, toward the small hours, forty or fifty miles from London, in a wheelless carriage with exhausted horses and drunken post-boys, and have got back in time to be received with never-forgotten compliments."

Such a training led to an almost excessive animation in his expression. His books were written rapidly, and, like his life, impress one with the sense of an almost strained whirl of activity and excitement. This train-

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ing, it may at once be confessed, was not conducive to the utmost refinement and delicacy of shading in portraying emotions and situations, and we should not be surprised, therefore, to find his sentiment exaggerated at times almost into sentimentality, and his humor so broad as to verge often on the farcical. But it is equally true that those traits decidedly pleased his day, which still lingered under the sunshine of Romanticism, and that even in our own somewhat calmer era his use of the larger elemental emotions, his intense convictions, and his enthusiastic belief in the goodness of mankind are still most effective. He was naturally an actor; he saw the dramatic possibilities in all that he observed; his imagination overwhelmed his judgment; and under the stress of his heated fancy, his views of motives, emotions, and deeds amounted virtually to hallucinations.

It is very doubtful whether in these particulars he improved with age; many critics have declared his earlier books his best. Perhaps he went to his work with preconceived notions, and no statement of changed conditions could shake these stubborn convictions. He came to America in 1842 with settled ideas as to the defects in our civic and social life, and it was impossible for the literary results—*American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*—to be other than prejudiced and unfair. Such a man, however, is a mighty force in times when reforms are crying for champions, and his whole-hearted work for the oppressed in Great Britain deserved and obtained the gratitude of the English nation. That he was wrong in some of his descriptions of British prison life, slum conditions, court injustice, and official red tape

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and tyranny is not to be doubted; but to decide that the exaggeration was excessive, would be a most unwarranted conclusion. Those who are acquainted with London of the twentieth century can with but little difficulty point out the "creatures that once were men," and can find suffering and cruelty far more bitter than any pictured by Charles Dickens.

Two writers, now almost entirely unknown, largely influenced the earlier writings of Dickens. Theodore Hook, a careless, quick, but often sharp delineator of humorous characters, was, for about twenty years (1820-1840) the joker of London literary circles. He observed society with a keen eye, and in *Sayings and Doings* (1824-1830) he exposed with merciless frankness and wit the mean trickery, duplicity, and blackmailing of the societies with which he was acquainted. Dickens admired this audacious fellow's manner of putting things, and evidently enjoyed his hearty, easily understood humor and broad characterizations. Pierce Egan, once famous in both England and America, began in July, 1821, the publication in monthly instalments of *Life in London; or the Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn, Esq.*—a series which was illustrated by Cruikshank, then at his best, and which had a host of hearty readers. The London cockneys and their ridiculous dialect introduced into these sketches were the very same as those used later by Dickens with such masterly effects. Corinthian Tom and Bob Logic, an Oxford man, go with Jerry into the haunts of London's various planes of society, and the vigorous scenes resulting are full of that hearty humor and animation which were later to be so characteristic of Boz. That Egan's

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stories had dramatic possibilities was evidenced by their highly successful staging in London and New York, and this quality, too, must have appealed to Dickens. In 1828 Egan closed the series with *The Finish of the Adventures of Tom, Jerry, and Logic*, in which some of the characters are violently killed, some die in wretchedness, while Jerry, now reformed, marries a country belle, and becomes a model Justice of the Peace. Thus Dickens fed his youthful genius upon works so crude in some ways that modern criticism would have little more than contempt for them. But this is not to be placed to Dickens's discredit. Did not Shakespeare use in the same manner the poor translations of Italian romances—with some rather commendable differences between the sources and the results?

In April, 1836, while Egan was in the midst of his success, Dickens published the first number of the *Pickwick Papers*—with what success all the world knows. As first written, these sketches were intended as a sort of commentary on Robert Seymour's cockney sporting plates; but Seymour died soon after the first number appeared, and Dickens, changing his plan, wrote with far more freedom and charm. The influence of Egan in this work is not to be denied. Egan's papers had told of a certain fat fellow, undoubtedly a literary forefather of Mr. Pickwick; Pickwick itself is the name of a place used by Egan; some adventures of Dickens's hero are similar to those of Egan's Skinflint; the rural scenes associated with Squire Hawthorn were evidently helpful to the greater writer.

Egan and Hook, however, used the same themes and characters over and over; their inventive ability was

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strictly limited. Charles Dickens had an inexhaustible store of figures and incidents; *Pickwick Papers* alone possesses a host of characters and a half hundred distinctly different situations. Moreover, unlike Hook and Egan, Dickens had a sympathy too large for mere ridicule of the lower classes; he might laugh *with* them, but scarcely ever *at* them. Indeed, *Pickwick Papers* marks a turning point in English fiction; for it was one of the first works to emphasize most clearly humanitarianism in the novel. There was so much in society, church, and law in need of a change from harsh rigidity to liberal sympathy, and the novel under Dickens expressed more and more clearly the call of the times for a larger humanity in all things.

The philanthropic tendency in fiction had been checked by Scott, who had a poor opinion of the ethical value of the novel; but in the days of Charles Dickens it returned to its own with immense power. In 1830 Bulwer-Lytton had pointed out in *Paul Clifford* that the prisons were crime-productive; Mrs. Gaskell showed the miserable conditions of the lower laborers; other writers of less genius undertook the same investigations; and, in the three decades between 1830 and 1860 a great number of treatises of this kind were produced. This was the sort of thing very close to the heart of Dickens; the Gothic, with all its blood-curdling ghosts was out-Gothiced by his accounts of prison life. Modern England, as pictured by his pen, was more exciting than the feudal realms of old; a mob of the nineteenth century was proved more interesting than a battle of ancient knights; and a dirty tenement in a fever-stricken slum became more horrible than a castle dungeon of

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yore. Scott spoke from history; Dickens spoke from what he considered accurate, trustworthy observation.

The trustworthiness of it, however, was denied by many of his contemporaries. Carlyle and other students of social life, after rather close investigation, declared that in most cases the conditions were greatly exaggerated by this novelist, and that in many instances the conditions described had ceased to exist many years before. In short, Dickens, thinking too often of the bitter days of his childhood, had failed to notice the improvements that had been quietly progressing throughout the days of his manhood, and thus, unintentionally no doubt, he has left impressions, especially among Americans and foreign readers, that are undeniably erroneous. He may have been wrong in many of his premises; but these premises granted, he constructs a story wonderful in its detailed effectiveness. His exaggerations doubtless did no harm, while his contagious sympathy may have given fresh impetus to the good work then in progress. He had small faith in the power of Parliament to effect reforms; rather his hope was based upon the awakening of the sympathy and indignation of the British public, and he wrote from a heart burning with zeal created by his own early experiences and resulting convictions.

How did he infuse his novels with their immense power? In the first place, there was, seemingly, no limit to his ability in invention. There are more incidents in any one of his novels than in a half-dozen works produced by some present-day novelists. Nor are these episodes and situations loosely put together; each, distinctly visualized as it is, seems a natural part

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of the lengthy and well-filled whole. His inventiveness in characterization is no less remarkable. He created hundreds of figures and each is as distinct, as lovable, or as hateful as the folk who pass us daily. He saw the details of his beings—their forms and natures—with such distinctness that critics have sometimes declared the personages who joy and sorrow throughout his pages to be nothing short of caricatures. Surely this is unjust. Pickwicks, Samuel Wellers, Mrs. Gamps and Little Nells still walk the streets of not only London, but New York, and Paris, and all the other vast cities of the modern world. Dickens's actor-instinct, his love of the dramatic and the theatrical, may have tempted him at times to enlarge on certain traits; but in the main these things are very real, very human, and very recognizable.

Again, Dickens frankly appealed to the primal emotions of mankind—terror, humor, sorrow, joy—and he did it with an openness that has by no means pleased the stricter critics; and yet those who refuse to see the best art in his use of these elements are compelled to confess that they touch the soul and touch it deeply. Thackeray was afraid of such free use of emotion, and in public might have expressed cynical hints about sentimentality. Note, however, this little incident. A lady entering Thackeray's study found him in tears.

"Little Nell is dead," he said brokenly.

"Little Nell?" the lady repeated.

"Yes, Little Nell," was the answer, "she is dead—I've just been reading it." On his desk lay an open copy of *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

The British public of Dickens' and Thackeray's day

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had strong nerves, and the appeal could seldom be too violent. Even to-day, while the author's premeditated sentiment may no longer cause such heart-rending sorrow, there is a poetic quality in his pathos that undoubtedly appeals to our sense of the beautiful. Again while his humor may not have that subtleness so much desired in these later years, the hearty British of the middle nineteenth century loved it for its very broadness. And, with all their broadness and simplicity, such scenes as Samuel Weller's composition of his "valentine" or Mr. Micawber's waiting in the midst of his numerous household for something to "turn up" are true and charmingly human.

It is this touch of the human on his every page that has saved Dickens. His characters may have the defect of Ben Jonson's people—they are often characters of one "humor" or trait, and one only. He may have too great a love for the eccentric in humanity. Micawber, the personification of eternal hopefulness and eternal poverty, Pecksniff, the personification of essential hypocrisy, Samuel Weller, the personification of unimprovable blockheadedness, may not be the average men of many traits and various hobbies we meet in our walks about town; but they are decidedly alive, and, if we have never met their kind, we are certainly sorry we have not. Dickens may have met them; to the very last he wrote with the air of a reporter rather than as a creator. And as a reporter, he improved upon most realists by describing the lights, as well as the shadows, of this life; too many authors who pride themselves upon their accurate photographic art capture nothing but the wretchedness and the depravity of mankind.

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What a mingling we find, for instance, in *Oliver Twist*, which may be taken as the type of most of his work,—a mingling of humor, tragedy, vivid characterization, social pictures; exposures of wrongs, what not!

Some novelists are realists because, at bottom, they are really doubters or cynics. Charles Dickens is an idealist; the savage distrust of Swift and the cynicism of Sterne were unknown to him; like Fielding, his belief in human kind was whole-hearted, boundless. He could well afford to be unreservedly humorous; a divine faith in the ultimate victory of the good and the true filled him with animated joy. It was the same divine faith in this ultimate victory, moreover, that caused him to labor so unceasingly in his attempt to expose and rid the earth of its foul spots. Your realist is often in grave danger of becoming a fatalist; for the distress of man may so impress him that in despair he will conclude that rebellion is futile. Not so with Charles Dickens. He had an old-fashioned belief in the innate goodness and sense of the common people; he admired the humbler walks of life; he despised lofty affectations, as well as all other forms of hypocrisy; and despite his intense realization and visualization of his scenes and characters, he portrayed lowly life without the vulgarity of Fielding or the cynicism of Sterne.

Since he wrote so often about the uncultured, his appeal is often to them as readers. The masses like to hear about themselves, and find genuine pleasure in photographs of their own daily work and play, and Dickens answered this craving with such pictures of familiar scenes, home life, city streets, shops, picnics, fights, and sports as English literature had never before

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possessed. Moreover, he was old-fashioned enough to believe in heroes, and, much to the satisfaction of the "average reader," at least one of the species is present in every story he wrote. Lastly, his belief in the necessity of a happy ending was so settled that even the most admiring of his critics must regret that he persistently perverted some natural tragedies into slightly strained, though enjoyable, comedies.

The influence of Charles Dickens can not even approximately be measured. He decreased for a space the rigor of realism; he taught a more genial mingling of the sweets and bitters of life; he displayed an ability in delineation of character so remarkable that it is doubtful whether some of the beings he created will ever be forgotten; he described the humble life of his nation in a manner not yet surpassed by any British writer; he expressed a faith in humanity, an understanding, a sympathy, an idealism that have made his name synonymous with good fellowship, kindness of heart, mutual helpfulness, and brotherly love.

THACKERAY

A genius may attract or repel other geniuses; in either case he is an influence. Thackeray (1811-1862) apparently had little liking for Scott's hero worship and romanticism, and even burlesqued the stirring adventures depicted by Sir Walter; but nevertheless, he owed much, both directly and indirectly, to Scott. The latter had made the way clear for future historical novelists; his merits could be imitated and his mistakes avoided; the opponents of his school could use him as a sort of landmark to aid them in keeping as far as possi-

ble from his domain and influence. Thackeray may thus have used him. *Henry Esmond* (1852), moreover, owes much to Dumas, and Dumas to Scott, and thus, unconsciously he paid homage to the borderman. Dumas, as well as Scott, used imaginary characters with a historic background, and did not hesitate to add the "theatricals" if apparently helpful; but Thackeray refused to give stage effects to his histories, and, omitting the antique words, the "heroics" and the strange descriptions of stranger castles, he made his people of yore live their pleasant or sordid life as probably they *did* live it. The result is that *Henry Esmond* is doubtless the best historical English novel since the days of Scott. It reproduces the atmosphere of a day that is past; its characters are lifelike and fit their time and environment; even their language sounds like that of their contemporaries, Addison and Steele.

All this was gained through Thackeray's insistence on *truth*. He, like Carlyle, found that Dickens's prisons and almshouses were not true to those actually existing, and he therefore refused to consider this as realism. Always possessing a touch of the aristocratic, just as Dickens did of the democratic, he disliked exaggeration of any sort, and, having the critical as well as the creative genius, he exposed rather mercilessly in his younger days the shallowness, artificiality, and above all, the lack of truth in Scott, Bulwer-Lytton, G. P. R. James, Disraeli, and even his friend Lever. In those early years he wrote with the tone of the witty man-of-the-world, somewhat like the self-composed, fashionable clubman, who is not going to take anything—including himself—too seriously. Extremely sane in all things,

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not possessed of the reforming zeal so apparent in Dickens, endowed with a personality that *would* shine through his work in spite of his apparent efforts not to seem very much interested in his theme, gifted with a flexible style that adapted itself admirably to every variation of his mood, he wrote even in that apprenticeship period with a finish, a facility, and a pleasantness that to this day make such work as *The Ravenswing* and *Memorials of Gormandizing* exceedingly enjoyable reading. At that time also he showed in such pieces as *Barry Lyndon*, *The Great Hoggarty Diamond* and the *Book of Snobs* some masterly character sketches.

All this time, however, Thackeray was not taking himself and his art seriously enough. The *Book of Snobs* and *Yellowplush Papers* are delightful things of their kind; but their kind was by no means the best that Thackeray could do. In January, 1847, the first number of *Vanity Fair* appeared, and its surprising success suddenly caused the novelist to realize his power and its attendant responsibilities. Never again did he return to the lighter supercilious tone; from the final number of *Vanity Fair* through *Esmond* (1852), *The Newcomes* (1855) and *The Virginians* (1859) he followed the deeper and broader currents of life.

Thackeray had had a good deal to say as to how fiction should be written. *Vanity Fair* was his ideal, his exposition of the rational methods to be pursued in the composition of a novel. He presented an historical background, but made no great use of it. He preferred to know, not so much how the campaign led up to the Battle of Waterloo, as what was going on in fashionable London at the time. He accepted things as they were,

and, seemingly, had no ethical, political, or educational purpose in the story. He refused to believe all little boys angelic, and all English damsels amiable. He had no Little Nells; but he did have—most decidedly—Becky Sharp. He had a fear of heroes; he had not come across many of the species during his journey here below. William Dean Howells, it is said, was asked by a lady why he had never pictured an ideal woman. "I am waiting for the Lord to create one first," was the novelist's reply. Thackeray evidently was of the same opinion regarding heroes. Since, therefore, all men are not heroic, he portrayed Rawdon Crawley. Indeed Thackeray almost overdid the matter; one is liable to exclaim, "What creature indeed can be trusted?"

Yet apparent as are the touches of cynicism in this as well as in any other novel by Thackeray, it would be folly to declare the ethical import absent. He was disgusted with humanity's eternal strivings for mere nothings; he exposed men and women, not because they were always positively wicked, but because they were oftentimes positively silly. Osborne gains wealth in the tallow business, and his son dies, and the old man remains a helpless wreck. Dobbin struggles for Amelia, and his reward is her useless self. Becky Sharp strives with all the power of her keen but immoral wits, and her gain is nothingness. To the mature and thoughtful this is all very true, and ethically effective; but *Vanity Fair*, in its efforts to counteract the idealism of Scott, is, perhaps, dangerous—especially when seen on the stage—to the young and unthinking. For Becky Sharp is brilliant, and one is liable to forget her sin in her wit. This is, in short, the picaresque in modern terms.

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Pendennis (1849-1850) is intended as a nineteenth-century *Tom Jones*, and does indeed possess much of the liberality of the optimistic Fielding. Evidently Thackeray was opposed to the stern conventionalities of the society of this era, and in this story of the young man making a fool of himself, first in school and later in society, then going astray for a while, and at length returning to the path of sobriety and common sense, the novelist voices his protest against the iron-clad rules and judgments too often laid down by the sanctified. Even here, however, while perhaps secretly defending, Thackeray allows that sly cynicism to aid him in making his young rascal ridiculous. See *Pendennis* at school:

“We have mentioned that he exhibited a certain partiality for rings, jewelry, and fine raiment of all sorts; and it must be owned that Mr. Pen, during his time at the university, was rather a dressy man, and loved to array himself in splendour. He and his polite friends would dress themselves out with as much care in order to go and dine at each other’s rooms, as other folks would who were going to enslave a mistress. They said he used to wear rings over his kid gloves, which he always denies; but what follies will not youth perpetrate with its own admirable gravity and simplicity? That he took perfumed baths is the truth; and he used to say he took them after meeting certain men of a very low set in hall. In Pen’s second year, when Miss Fotheringay made her chief hit in London, and scores of prints were published of her, Pen had one of these hung in his bedroom, and confided to the men of his set how awfully, how wildly, how madly, how passionately, he had loved that woman. He showed them in confidence the verses

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that he had written to her, and his brow would darken, his eyes roll, his chest heave with emotion as he recalled that fatal period of his life, and described the woes and agonies which he had suffered. The verses were copied out, handed about, sneered at, admired, passed from coterie to coterie. There are few things which elevate a lad in the estimation of his brother boys, more than to have a character for a great and romantic passion. Perhaps there is something noble in it at all times—among very young men, it is considered heroic—Pen was pronounced a tremendous fellow. They said he had almost committed suicide: that he had fought a duel with a baronet about her. Freshmen pointed him out to each other. As at the promenade time at two o'clock he swaggered out of college, surrounded by his cronies, he was famous to behold. He was elaborately attired. He would ogle the ladies who came to lionise the university, and passed before him on the arms of happy gownsmen, and give his opinion upon their personal charms, or their toilettes, with the gravity of a critic whose experience entitled him to speak with authority. Men used to say that they had been walking with Pendennis, and were as pleased to be seen in his company as some of us would if we walked with a duke down Pall Mall. He and the Proctor capped each other as they met, as if they were rival powers, and the men hardly knew which was the greater."

Unlike Dickens, Thackeray would not allow himself to take these foibles so seriously that he felt compelled to rant at them; on the contrary, he points out their folly with a condescending smile, and seems to whisper slyly, "Lo, these fools." This is the most embarrassing

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and irritating form of sarcasm; to smile condescendingly upon a fool is to make him realize for the moment that he is a fool, and this renders him dangerous. For this reason it has frequently and emphatically been stated that Thackeray is equal, if not superior, to Swift in irony and satire. Swift, however, looked upon men as essentially vicious; Thackeray considered them simply weak or foolish. He found commendable traits along with their laziness, selfishness, thick-headedness, or silliness. Rawdon Crawley, for instance, is an ignoramus lacking most moral principles; but his devotion to Rebecca shows him not a devil, but a miserably deluded human being.

The pathos of disillusionment is a strong point with Thackeray. This matter of self-deception and its heart-rending consequences furnishes many a bitter touch throughout his pages, and causes many unobservant readers to consider some portions bitterly cynical which are merely truthful. "What a dignity," he remarks, "it gives an old lady, that balance at the banker's! How tenderly we look at her faults, if she is a relation!"

The narrow minded, the petty, the mean are found in life, and should therefore be found in fiction; but the average man, with the average number of noble qualities is to be expected in both. He is not quite so conspicuous in *Vanity Fair* as many readers would wish. When Thackeray turned back to still earlier days and in his *Esmond* (1852), *The Virginians* (1858-59), and *The Newcomes* (1854-55) wrote something more nearly like the typical historical novels, he allowed himself a little more sentiment, more genuine and serious emotion, and more beauties in the natures of his

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characters. Here is more kindness, here a refreshing belief in humanity; mingled with human weaknesses are those qualities that constitute all-round manliness. These books of his maturer years are more true to life and humanity than are his earlier stories. These characters act and speak more nearly as we should expect, because their words and deeds are based on traits of character for which Thackeray's statements and descriptions have fully prepared us. Much as he disliked the theatrical, Thackeray, like Dickens, had the actor's instinct in that he could throw himself into the personality of his creatures—a snob in the *Book of Snobs*, an adventurer in *Barry Lyndon*, or an eighteenth-century gentleman in *Esmond*. It is this power of his personality that has made the beings he created permanent dwellers in the literary halls of fame.

Yet how curiously at times he treats these characters. His genius, like that of Rabelais and Sterne, delights in little surprising twists and cranks, and a certain aristocratic shyness or reserve emphasizes at least one of these twists. How often he assumes, or tries to assume, the guise of an impersonal manipulator entirely outside of the story, commenting with mock carelessness or cynicism upon the deeds and feelings of his characters—like a showman with an air of condescension showing off his puppets for the edification, not of himself, but of the public. And yet, when he chooses, how solemn he can become! The death scene of Colonel Newcome has scarcely been surpassed in English literature.

Plot is by no means Thackeray's forte. He takes his time about progressing with the story; he kills off people too conveniently, and sometimes forgets about it

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and brings them back to life. He exhibits his characters, and, like the aforementioned showman, often steps out before the audience to deliver a "lecturette" upon them. Either lacking the skill of inventing incidents, or not having a taste for them, he uses conversation where Dickens uses action. His chapters are frequently clever and indeed strong pictures of moments in life; but they just as frequently have no close and logical connection with their predecessors or successors. This is in part due to Thackeray's custom of writing the stories in monthly instalments for magazines; for in the only novel of his wholly finished before published, *Henry Esmond*, we have a plot admirable in its unity and apparent possibility.

It may be well for us to examine for a moment this frequently praised novel, *Henry Esmond*, and make some brief comparisons between it and other works by Thackeray. Not so filled with action and dramatic moments as *Vanity Fair*, nor possessing such a fascinating figure as Becky Sharp, it, nevertheless, from an artistic point of view, remains one of the greater novels of all literature. As has been intimated, Thackeray had come into the realm of true fiction by the pathway of satire. When we look over the writings of his younger days we easily discover that the seamy rather than the normal side of social life is revealed, and though the satire—often playful and sometimes mingled with pity, as it is—is not used as by Le Sage, for creating piquancy or as by Swift for a merciless flaying of all mankind, it is satire, nevertheless, and in so far it prevents Thackeray from presenting a thoroughly true, broad, and wholesome picture of humanity. Through such works as the

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Deuceace story, *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*, and *Barry Lyndon*, the author advanced to *Vanity Fair*; but even here, in this undoubted masterpiece, we are not given a normal picture; for surely the social structure of England has never consisted of Becky Sharp and her ilk.

This predilection toward exposing the scamps and frauds of life, a predilection doubtless caused in part by Thackeray's early financial losses, continued throughout *Vanity Fair*; but the immense success of this work could not but have an effect upon the novelist's view of mankind, and when we come to *Esmond* we find the tinge of bitterness or sarcasm has largely disappeared. In the opinion of many critics *Vanity Fair* is his masterpiece; as a comedy of manners of contemporary life it has been spoken of as the greatest work since *Tom Jones*. But, as indicated above, it is not broad enough. The group of hypocrites and rascals here assembled do not represent an average group from society. Here indeed are intensity, sharply portrayed characters, considerable invention in incident, and a number of highly dramatic scenes. Becky Sharp stands, with Uncle Toby and Sam Weller, as one of the clearest characters in fiction. But in *Esmond* Beatrix Castlewood, less brilliant, less striking than Becky, seems considerably nearer and truer to the human beings we see about us—beings with *some* good in their hearts, though sadly marred by their vanities and tyrannical ambitions. And of the other characters in this later novel similar statements might be made. Henry Esmond and Lady Castlewood belong to those finer natures that bless the world; while for even the worst sinners in the story

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Thackeray compels our sympathy rather than our contempt or hatred. In short, *Henry Esmond* puts before us a much healthier, saner impression of life than the more vigorous and perhaps more vivid pages of *Vanity Fair*.

From a standpoint purely artistic there can be little doubt of the supremacy of *Esmond*. "Its language is a miracle of art."⁵ Thackeray early reached a finished form of expression; *The Hoggarty Diamond*, written when he was twenty-six, has many of the masterly touches we find in his last works. But in *Esmond*, where the eighteenth-century spirit is expressed by the general tone of the language, the effective art of this style is so remarkable as almost to draw our attention away from the plot itself. That plot, also, as has been pointed out, may not be equal to some of Thackeray's other novels in the number of incidents and exciting moments; but in its closeness of structure, its logical sequence, and its lack of extraneous matter it undoubtedly shows Thackeray at his best as a plot maker. He was not always careful in striking out the irrelevant; in such a work as *The Newcomes*, which, after all, is more nearly a great picture than a story, the structure is of such a nature that the book might easily have been prolonged indefinitely. *Esmond*, however, is a work drawing to a definite end; it pictures its day, but the pictures are of definite use in the making of the story or in our final estimate of the characters. This, then, is a novel in which neither satire, commentary, nor picturesque description delays us unduly.

Doubtless to the end of time Thackeray will be ac-

⁵ Frederic Harrison: *Forum*, Vol. XVIII, p. 329.

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cused of harsh cynicism. We have but to read *Esmond* and note the unconscious dignity and nobility of its hero's sacrificing nature, so thoroughly impressed but not pressed upon us, to realize that this novelist came in his later years, if not in his earlier, to see the beauty of humanity. If further proof were needed, one might turn to that very work most often pointed out as cynical, *Vanity Fair*, and there find touches of exquisite pathos. Read of Old Sedley's last moment:

"One night when she stole into his room she found him awake, when the broken old man made his confession. 'Oh, Emmy, I've been thinking we were very unkind and unjust to you,' he said, and put out his cold and feeble hand to her. She knelt down and prayed by his bedside, as he did too, having still hold of her hand. When our turn comes, friend, may we have such company in our prayers."

Thus, in the midst of his bitterest satire there is a vein of pity for frail mankind. The large sympathy of Dickens for everybody and everything may have been impossible to Thackeray; he undoubtedly showed a certain indifference toward Nature, and he left virtually unnoticed the millions of strugglers and sufferers ranking below the middle classes. But in the field with which this master chose to occupy himself—that of the higher social classes—we find in most of the characters, not the idealized nature discovered by Dickens's optimistic eyes, but a realistic blending of good and bad, a blending so human as to be pathetic.

After all, the portrayal of human nature is the greatest work of the artist. It is this that causes innumerable students and critics of literature to look upon

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Thackeray as the main novelist of the nineteenth century. He looked at men and women keenly; he put them down without any compromises or changes for the sake of ethical or reforming purposes. He gave such pictures of mankind as even those disliking his plainness must confess to be accurate. He smiled so sarcastically upon our petty prejudices and meanness that we who have read him should feel heartily ashamed of our foolishness and determine to be a little wiser. He showed men what they might be in terms of what they are.

AUSTEN'S INFLUENCE

While Dickens and Thackeray were achieving success after success various minor novelists were producing work at least interesting and now and then masterly. Jane Austen's influence was more and more evident as the middle of the nineteenth century approached, and nowhere did it exhibit itself more clearly than in these writers of lesser fame. In 1843 Macaulay declared her the equal of Shakespeare in character delineation; in 1848 George Henry Lewes said that he would rather have written *Pride and Prejudice* than any of the Waverley novels. Mrs. Opie's *Simple Tales* and *Tales of Real Life* were evidently written with Miss Austen's work as an ideal; Miss Ferrier's *Inheritance* and *Marriage*, which won the admiration of Scott, show the same ability to use the smaller incidents of life in well-woven plots; Mrs. Trollope used the same sort of domestic themes; Baroness Tautphœus transferred the same methods to her pictures of both English and German life, as in *Quits* and *The Initials*; Mrs. Henry Wood, in her *East*

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Lynne, created along similar lines a melodramatic story; Dinah Muloch Craik in *John Halifax, Gentleman*, told a story that would have been dear to the heart of Jane Austen; Mrs. Gaskell, in her *Mary Barton*, transferred the same realistic methods to her sympathetic investigations of the factory classes.

ELIZABETH GASKELL

Elizabeth Gaskell is of course best known through her quiet village picture, *Cranford* (1853); but it should be remembered that in the forties and fifties she was being discussed for some other volumes considered far more important at the time. The year 1848 was a momentous one for the hordes of English workmen who gathered in and about London and loudly demanded their rights. Charles Kingsley, the almost unknown preacher at Eversley, later to become famous as the author of *Westward Ho* (1855), watched the dangerous movement closely and sympathetically, and at length burst forth with his *Alton Locke* and *Yeast*, two passionate appeals for the betterment of the laborer. It was but an indication of the humanitarianism that had reached such a glowing heat in the souls of the English-speaking people. Charles Dickens was to add to the flame; in America Harriet Beecher Stowe was to show a similar philanthropy; Mrs. Gaskell was portraying perhaps more truly than any of these the pitiable conditions of the toilers. Her work was the result of personal investigations; for both she and her husband, a clergyman, lived among the poor, visited the workers' huts, and offered words of consolation while gathering data. The resulting stories, *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and*

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South (1855), struck home by their fidelity to life, and added much to the wave of humanitarianism that continued to the last days of Dickens.

Elizabeth Gaskell, however, as we all know, pictured other conditions than those sordid ones found about the mills and factories. The average rural woman of England, the gossipy little social circles of the secluded country towns, the workings of the restless human soul where physical activity had almost ceased—these were themes found highly worthy of her pen in *Cranford* (1853). The old village where conventionality was king, this spinster's paradise, is forevermore famous because she, like Miss Austen, showed humanity moved by the same motives and emotions in the hidden corners of the world as in the roaring streets of the mad city. Other stories by Elizabeth Gaskell are now almost forgotten; but her *Moorland Cottage* (1850) was considered so worthy by George Eliot that it evidently furnished many a hint for *The Mill on the Floss*; while *Ruth* (1853), as a psychological study, would prove of value and interest to many a thoughtful reader of these latter days. This book is designed to show the eternal consequences of sin, whether the mistake be recent or long past. Its text might be Macbeth's weighty words: "If it were done when it is done it were well it were done quickly." Ruth, a seamstress, is ruined and abandoned by a young gentleman. She is about to kill herself, is saved by a preacher, and is henceforth reported to be a widow. At length, however, the falsehood is discovered; Ruth becomes a nun and dies of fever. Here we find a surprisingly keen probing into motives—the very kind of psychology later to be so thoroughly mastered by George

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Eliot—a psychology far different from the broad sort used by Richardson, but, rather, a subtle harmonizing of sequence of incidents with sequence of motives.

GEORGE BORROW

There is almost invariably a reaction to every literary movement. The quiet home life of such books as *Cranford* and the novels of Jane Austen was somewhat irritating to writers of more vigorous blood, and now and again they, consciously or unconsciously, voiced their protest against such pictures of the passiveness produced by too much civilization. George Borrow, for instance, doubtless considered himself as realistic as Jane Austen or Elizabeth Gaskell; but he chose in *Lavengro* (1851) and *The Romany Rye* (1857) the open-air, gypsy life where Scott's sentiment for heraldry and noblemen had no part, but where the virility, frankness, and kindness of men who live close to nature infused a glamour totally different and yet almost as pleasing. Charles Reade was another who stood for realism, but not of the stuffy parlor sort. In *Christie Johnstone* (1853) for example, he contrasts with the idle rich, mumbling their bits of philosophy picked up from careless reading, the rough, open life of the Scotch fishwives; while in *Never Too Late to Mend* (1856) he shows the stern life of strong men in Australia. Such books he could well declare to be realistic; his care in securing exact facts was unceasing; he rummaged through whole libraries to find the actual conditions and environments.

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CHARLES KINGSLEY

Interested as Charles Kingsley was in the social upheavals of his day, and realistic and vigorous as were his descriptions of the miseries of the toilers, he gained more lasting fame by the mingling of history and realism found in his two novels, *Hypatia* (1853) and *Westward Ho* (1855). The first of these deals with that most suggestive of themes, the momentous struggle between Greek and Christian civilization during the fifth century. Most poets and novelists have found it more to their liking to side with the Greek paganism; but Kingsley, a clergyman, preferred the other view. In his intense hatred, however, of Roman Catholicism, he perverted his history badly to maintain certain points; and only the admirable vigor of the work saves it from the condemnation of discerning critics. *Westward Ho*, dealing with the English adventures of Elizabeth's day, is still more animated; indeed its picture of the embarking of Sir Humphrey Gilbert has scarcely ever been excelled in bustle and vivid activity. Doubtless Kingsley would have claimed realism for the general character of his work; but this is far nearer Scott than Austen.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Perhaps of all the middle-century reactionaries against Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë was the most violent. The same year that she published *Jane Eyre* (1847), her sister Emily had written a kind of Gothic romance, *Wuthering Heights*, that doubtless would have disgusted Miss Austen. Here a man born in shame and

denied the privileges of other men long seeks revenge in vain, and at length, despairing, but unconquered, starves himself, dies with a sneer on his lips, and is buried beside a woman, a side of whose coffin he had torn away years before. Charlotte Brontë, while not using the weird to such an extent, spoke with as much protest. Disgusted with the tameness of Jane Austen, she declared for the storm and tragedy of life, the wild thrill of the melodramatic. Her work also was in some ways a turning back to the Gothic. She pictures a maniac, a solitary man walking in a dark garden, the commotion of tempests, winds, and lightning. Of course all the mysteries are finally cleared, but they are mysterious enough while they last.

Much of her life had been spent on the moors of Yorkshire; the people of her home land were a plain, blunt, almost harsh folk; to her, as well as to them, other people seemed affected. A portion of her days, before she became famous, had been spent in the school-room; she came into a broader life too late to gain the insight of a master observer of mankind; her view of the great world was entirely too limited. All these facts, and perhaps her own realization of them, created in her an irony at times unsparing. In *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Shirley* (1849), both dealing with her own section of England, and *Villette* (1853), based upon her experience as a teacher in Brussels, she rebels against an overdose of idealism, and delineates friends and foes as she thinks they really are. She refuses to picture Sir Charles Grandisons and languishing Clarissas. *Jane Eyre* is not of their sort. The young heroine adores truth, but abhors comfortable self-righteousness. As an

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orphan, she is harshly treated; but after securing an education and becoming a teacher, she marries the father of one of her pupils and is contented. Such a plot has been used innumerable times, but the character of the woman and the truthfulness to life save even such a worn theme from flatness. Intense love, intense hatred, intensity in all things—these charge the whole work. *Jane Eyre* has a fascinatingly reckless bearing. When asked by a righteous character what she must do to escape damnation, she replies, "I must keep in good health and not die." We should not be surprised to learn that the book was condemned as coarse, irreverent, even immoral. And yet, after all, it was but a part of the great democratic outcry of the day. Jane herself is simply a democratic, average girl, pretty, but not ravishing. Her lover is not quite so sweet as Sir Charles Grandison, not quite so ugly as Caliban. Only after he loses an eye and a hand in saving his maniac wife from a fire does Jane fully realize her love for him. The book is of course exaggerated; but it shows rebellion against social conventions; it speaks for the so-called laboring classes; it indicates the silent, bitter revolt going on in millions of the author's contemporaries.

Shirley (1849) is milder in tone perhaps because under the advice of Lewes Charlotte Brontë had read Jane Austen more carefully; but she could never curb herself to the quietness of such a woman. Miss Austen could not have imagined the scornful, wild, untamed Shirley Keeldar, the ardent priestess of Nature. In her splendid descriptions of Yorkshire life, the author does indeed imitate the photographic art of Austen; but in trying to place herself under the influence of

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another observer, she obtained the searching of heart of neither *Pride and Prejudice* nor her own *Jane Eyre*.

In *Villette* we find her abandoning the advice of Lewes and returning to her own personality. This book is indeed a *Jane Eyre* with a Brussels setting. In *Jane Eyre*, however, her protest is outspoken and almost violent; but here is the calmness of despair; here sorrow so evidently outweighs the joy of life that resignation born of fatalism seems inevitable. Brontë may use at times scenes as exciting as Scott's; she may create characters as vigorous and as full of spirit as any of his; but she is a realist, nevertheless—a realist in the analysis of emotions, a searcher into motives. She is a forerunner of George Eliot in depicting not only outer but inner manners,—manners of thought, settled prejudices, modes of viewing life.

GEORGE ELIOT

George Eliot (1819–1880) had not only a feminine intuition and discernment of details, but a masculine reasoning nature. Her mind was stored with a vast mass of information; her study of philosophy had taught her to observe closely the cause and the effect of phenomena; her keen observation of men gave her a perspicuity granted to but few English writers. More important, perhaps, than all these was the personality of the woman, intolerant of hypocrisy, zealous for righteousness, but full of a longing sympathy for the erring and the suffering.

The early life of Marian Evans was spent in the Middle English country, where she was reared and educated under the strictest religious training of the evangel-

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ical sort. While still but a very young woman, however, under the influence of the Brays of Coventry, she broke away from the faith of her fathers, translated Strauss' *Life of Christ*, and, much to the bitter resentment of her family, became decidedly radical in religious matters. But it must not be thought that her belief in God was destroyed; it was merely changed and perhaps strengthened. Her husband and biographer, Mr. Cross, says: "We generally began our daily reading with some chapter from the Bible—parts of which she particularly enjoyed reading aloud. Her deep, rich voice, with its organ-like notes, gave new meaning and beauty to the most familiar passages." In her religion, as in all other things, she was an investigator, and as she progressed mentally and morally, her views on the matter underwent changes that seemed dangerously radical to those who took their faith ready-made from the theologians. That she was open minded to all opinions was always evident. "Open to conviction?" she once exclaimed. "Indeed, I should think so. I am open to conviction on all points except dinner and debts. I hold that the one must be eaten and the other paid. These are my only prejudices."

It was this refusal to accept laws and customs without questioning that doubtless led her to brave conventionality in living with Mr. Lewes without the formality of a marriage ceremony. Lewes's wife had twice been guilty of adultery; but the law would not grant him a divorce because he had forgiven the first offense, and had received her again into his home. It was this technicality that prevented his marriage to George Eliot, and during the twenty-five years of their union till his

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death in 1878, England came to look upon them as truly man and wife. That she had respect, if not a servile reverence for the marriage ceremony, is shown by her legal union two years later with John W. Cross.

It was Lewes who turned her genius into the channels of fiction. As an editor of the *Westminster Review*, she had written learned articles of genuine depth and originality of view; but she had displayed a close interest in fiction as early as 1856 by writing sharp and daring reviews of the shallow novels written by women of her day.

The next year she published in *Blackwood's* her *Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton*, and her career as a story-writer was begun. *Scenes from Clerical Life*, appearing in 1858, contained the above-mentioned piece, *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*, and *Janet's Repentance*, and this collection met with such a welcome that all doubts as to her ability were dissipated. Now came *Adam Bede* (1859), followed by *The Mill on the Floss* in 1860, and *Silas Marner* in 1861, and English readers could confidently and accurately state what her salient characteristics were. Suddenly, without warning, there came a change of scenes, characters, and methods in *Romola* (1863), and the British public was indeed surprised. In *Felix Holt* (1866), *Middlemarch* (1871) and *Daniel Deronda* (1876), the vein was deeper, the philosophy a little darker, the life a little more shadowed with sacrifice and sorrow than in the earlier works; as she herself said, it was an old woman writing these later books; never again could she quite obtain the cheer of her earlier views.

Elizabeth Gaskell had no small influence upon those

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first attempts in fiction. The *Scenes from Clerical Life* is much like Gaskell's quiet stories; *The Mill on the Floss* is like *Moorland Cottage* in that it deals with the tendencies of childhood training. But George Eliot soon discovered that Mrs. Gaskell made contrasts entirely too vivid—that too many of her characters were altogether good or altogether bad. She admired Dickens's work; for, with all its exaggeration, it was founded on keen and sympathetic observation. Under such influences she seems to have resolved to be a sort of Rembrandt, portraying people plainly, even if ugliness must be mingled with the beautiful. She had great sympathy with the life she had seen in her girlhood; she had no snobbish ideas about the plain people of Warwickshire; and she pictured their modes and customs and repeated their ideas with accuracy, but with no hint of condescension. Whether in the miser's hut or in the great country mansion, she was entirely at home, and she looked upon race, sex, and sect with an admirable absence of prejudice. In *Adam Bede*, for instance, England has its first honest and sympathetic picture of the Methodists; in *Daniel Deronda* we find her attempting the delineation of a faultless hero in her effort to create liberalism toward the Jew.

Perhaps it was this intense sympathy that prevented success in her efforts to adopt Thackeray's social satire; the sober philosophy of her later works is much truer to her. Perhaps, too, it is the cause of her tendency to sermonize in her earlier books—bits of prose that would be worthy of high appreciation elsewhere, but which, in her novels, prove rather inartistic interruptions. But these things make clear one point; if she

could not believe in orthodox Christianity she was steeped in its self-sacrificing spirit. It is this that causes a sense of tragedy to brood over all her stories, and it is this spirit, too, that gives to some of her pages a pathos truer than any found in the pages of her contemporaries. Her pathos, it may readily be discovered, is not the creation of any rhetorical agency or any intrusion of her own views, but is the inevitable result of certain incidents or situations which the nature of this or that character has brought to pass in some strife of the soul. We may note here, also, the same trait in her humor; any attempt to separate it from the character presenting it is vain and ruinous.

As George Eliot approached middle life she seemed to be returning somewhat to her childhood love for Scott; furthermore, it appears that at the same time she came under the influence of Auguste Comte, the French thinker. The result was a sort of idealism in *Middlemarch* and *Deronda* very different from the realism of *Adam Bede*. Throughout all her changes, however, her faith in the power of little things, the might of the commonplace, never wavered. She may have founded some of her special theories upon the ideas of Comte; but she thrust home certain great beliefs common to all nations, such as the wages of sin is death, or he who sows the wind shall reap the whirlwind. Such large general axioms will forever prove good material for fiction; they are grounded in the heart of mankind. In her use of these general principles she pursued her investigations as scientifically as the great Darwin, whose *Origin of Species* appeared the same year as *Adam Bede*. Both the scientist and the novelist

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looked keenly at cause and effect; both showed the subtle process of change resulting from neglected small forces in the past; both reached their conclusions unsparingly and with mathematical precision.

This ethical import is never absent from her work; it is scarcely ever absent from any masterpiece; perhaps the day may come when critics, instead of condemning it, may deem it inseparable from great art. In George Eliot early sins or early training will come back sometime to demand their harvest. The inner man will, in spite of all, betray himself some day in the outer man. Indeed we have here the theory as to the power of the subconscious mind so widely exploited in the twentieth century. This woman suddenly brings before us—quietly enough it is true, but impressively—some incident that hints of the moral tendency of the character under observation, and then she begins to unroll, carefully and calmly, the scroll of destiny. She has infinite sympathy for the victim of destiny—that is, the destiny which each man's own nature condemns him to—but she is merciless in the unrolling. If the scroll shows a weakness or stain in the soul of the victim, that weakness reappears time after time with ever-broadening surface until the whole career is brought to shame and ruin. This is indeed tragedy—that possible tragedy born with the soul of every man. *Middlemarch* is perhaps the most sorrowfully tragic of all, because most often occurring in the history of mankind. A girl with high ideals and a romantic desire to be a martyr for a cause, when brought to the test proves to herself her utter inability to stand it. Far back in the life of herself and of her husband a mistake in

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training or in thinking had been made, and after many days that error cried out with the voice of doom.

Those who have read George Eliot know, however, that all is not darkness. Silas Marner suffered long because of the hasty passion of his youth; but at length a little child led his soul back to the light. In *Adam Bede* and *Middlemarch*, and all the others, for that matter, the stern chastisement of fate, inevitable, though long deferred, cleanses the souls of these beings of George Eliot's imagination, and they come forth purified, calmed, and filled with an understanding and sympathy impossible before.

It is this appreciation of the complexity of life, the recognition of the good and the evil tendencies in each soul, the clear, accurate report of the unending struggle between these two natures, the highly accented personality of the figures that pass to and fro in her pages, the high idealism of so many of these characters, the unswerving course of her analysis of motives, that will not allow George Eliot's name to be forgotten. And greater than all else are her intense sympathy for the righteous aspirations of man and her noble belief in their possibilities.

Oh, may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence. . . .
. . . May I reach
That purest heaven; be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony;
Enkindle generous ardor.

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REALISM VS. ROMANTICISM

As has been stated, the nineteenth century was an age of protest in fiction, as in almost everything else. Hardly had a novelist illustrated his theory of life and art when some other writer entered the arena to protest and to display his own theory and art. Realism might seem for a day to be conquering, when suddenly some writer would burst into fame with a book as romantic as anything produced by Scott. In the midst of the middle-century realism, for instance, came Blackmore's *Lorna Doone* (1869), a story containing the very essence of the romantic; while George Eliot was still busy mapping out the history of a human soul, William Black entered with his *Princess of Thule* (1873) and other gorgeous romances making much use of love and pathos. A little later, Rider Haggard showed his extreme reaction from realism with his weird stories of the ancient East; and at length William Morris, poet, novelist, and confirmed dreamer, cried out bitterly against too much picturing of the painfully true.

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

Within the field of realism itself there was protest and strife. Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) was one of those within that field who found much to displease his artistic nature. He declared that Dickens created vice in order that he might have something to attack; he did not relish what he considered the impossible humor of Boz; he liked some phases of Thackeray's method and style, and even copied them, but he objected to Thackeray's satire. He sought to show real life and average

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people, and possessing a milder nature than either Dickens or Thackeray, he did not reproduce the animation of the one or the pungency of the other. He wrote so rapidly and so regularly in his more than thirty books that he necessarily produced much that was commonplace; but he did do admirable work in delineating certain characters of a high nobility. Like Thackeray, he allowed certain figures to reappear time after time, and thus, as they developed in book after book, the English reading public came to know them as they had known few fictitious personages. In *The Warden* (1855), *Barchester Towers* (1857), *Dr. Thorne* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1861), *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867)—all known as “the Cathedral Stories”—the same types of country clergy and gentry about the old cathedral town of Barchester are shown time after time in all the phases of their physical, intellectual, and moral growth or degeneracy. Trollope’s sustaining power is admirable; his ability to retain our interest for a particular type of social life through book after book is proof enough of it; these clerical characters used repeatedly have come to be recognized as among the best in the world’s fiction.

The pictures of the social life he chooses to describe are often minutely detailed and more realistic perhaps, because more true, than similar attempts on the part of Dickens. Doubtless Trollope felt this; for he does not hesitate to take a fling at Dickens, Carlyle, the editors of the *London Times*, and others whom he looks upon as “sentimental reformers.” These clergymen and workers of his are plain men of strength or of weakness, often henpecked, more often uninspired, some-

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times positive sinners. And, with such extremely honest realism go some convincing pictures of every-day English women—women very pleasant sometimes, very cross at other times, and particularly dangerous with the tongue at all times. The plots are generally conventional enough, with sufficient love-making to hold the public, and enough suspense at times as to which one of two sweethearts a lover may choose; but it is the people, not the plot, that attract—these undeniably human people, who pass slowly before us as they go about their petty schemes and intrigues. This is indeed the sort of work Jane Austen would have admired, and again the sort that Scott would have admitted beyond his powers.

GEORGE MEREDITH

G. K. Chesterton has said, "The glory of George Meredith is that he combined subtlety with primal energy; he criticized life without losing his appetite for it. In him alone being a man of the world did not mean being a man disgusted with the world."⁶ Meredith (1828–1909), the last of the Victorians, was not extensively read, and was often misunderstood by his contemporaries. His Browning-like style was something of a barrier between him and the general public; he himself said, "The English people know nothing about me." And yet his thoughts and theories were sufficiently simple. But those thoughts and theories, while simple, were not very orthodox, and the conservative British refused to follow him. Speaking of his people, he said, shortly before his death, "There has always been some-

⁶ *Illustrated London News*, May 22, 1909.

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thing antagonistic between them and me. With book after book it was always the same outcry of censure and disapproval. The first time or two I minded it. Since, I have written to please myself."

And what types pleased himself? Half Irish and half Welsh, his nature, Celtic to the core, should have possessed much of the poetic, and that it did is evidenced in his books of verse; but in his novels the poetic was rigidly restrained; in his prose he became the keen-eyed observer of the weaknesses of humanity—especially of men. He saw certain flaws in our individual and social structure, and, showing us these things with subtle art, he doubtless thought to make us better; but his art was a bit too subtle for his day. Sentiment plays small part in his stories—the intellectual Mrs. Carlyle deplored the lack of tears in his work—he refuses to allow sentimental mist to obscure his view of life. So close indeed is he to life that he often chose real men and women as the people of his pages—Admiral Maxse as Beauchamp, in *Beauchamp's Career*; the German agitator, Ferdinand Lassalle, as Sigismund Alvan in the *Tragic Comedians*; Caroline Norton, the granddaughter of Richard Sheridan, as the heroine in *Diana of the Crossways*. However romantic Meredith's soul may have been naturally, he resolutely kept his feet squarely upon a very earthy earth.

Meredith began his fiction just a little earlier than George Eliot. The *Ordeal of Richard Feverel* appeared in the same year as *Adam Bede*; then followed such works as *Evan Harrington* (1861), *Beauchamp's Career* (1876), *The Egoist*, (1879), *Diana of the Crossways* (1885) and *The Amazing Marriage* (1895).

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These works puzzled or offended the old-fashioned—especially the men. The passion of Feverel, the social satire of *Evan Harrington*, the “gorgeous humanity” of *Harry Richmond*, the merciless analysis of *The Egoist*, were beyond the conception of many who trod the beaten path of thought, and those who appreciated Meredith came to be looked upon as belonging to the same affected group as the Browningites or the Whitmanites.

It requires attention to read George Meredith. He is psychological always. Like George Eliot, he cares little for “an audience impatient for blood and glory.” He deals with the life of the soul as well as with the life of the body; and, like Eliot, he shows the scientific spirit of his era by his merciless delving into causes and effects, and by his refusal to take the venerated sentiments for granted. It was his effort to overthrow some of these hoary theories—especially those dealing with love and the nature of woman—that caused him to create for English fiction a new type of heroine—a healthy, energetic being, glorying in her own personality, and fighting hard to preserve this individuality. These women of his have very decided ideas as to the kind of man they could love, and they do not hesitate to cast aside those who weary them. It is plain that the creator of such women was not to be deceived by the hypocrisy hidden under any form of namby-pamby sentimentalism. He once stated that he hated those authors who “fiddle harmonics on the strings of sensualism”; and yet he himself may at times have gone a little too far in the other direction, and fiddled discords on the strings of individualism. He preached against the present code of sex relations as a relic of

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barbarism; this romantic business of swearing *eternal* love seemed to him nonsense. In *The Egoist*, for instance, Willoughby thinks himself deeply in love; but to the author it is simply a weak animalism quivering in the presence of fresh beauty.

And how fresh, in both soul and body, are these "beauties." These physically ideal women of Meredith's possess much of the charm that always accompanies perfect health; but at the same time, they possess the equal charm of an independent and self-controlled spirit. From the first to the last of his novels his heroines are animated, superbly alive. In his last work, *Celt and Saxon*, left unfinished at his death, we find such descriptions as this: "Yonder bare hill she came racing up, with a plume in the wind; she was over the long brown moor, look where he would, and vividly was she beside the hurrying beck, where it made eddies and chattered white." Man's egotistical treatment of woman is a favorite theme with Meredith, and in the contest with such feminine wills as he creates, man has decidedly the worst of it.

As mentioned before, his seemingly obscure way of dealing with characters and in expressing himself, has discouraged or repulsed many readers. His earlier work shows him to have been a master of the melodies of the English language; but as in the course of his writing he found himself not appreciated, he doubtless began to write "to please himself," and too often, not unlike Carlyle, used the odd instead of the obviously beautiful. Perhaps, with Celtic eccentricity, he loved an aphorism too much. Of wit he possessed his share; but sometimes it sounds a trifle far-fetched. His humor

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is of a peculiar type—never loud-mouthed, a half-serious, half-aside humor, which points out the inconsistencies of the passing procession. Pathos is not absent—pathos not of the sentimental type, but the pathos found in modern tragedy, wherein violent physical death is no longer considered necessary or half so bitter as mental or moral torture. Meredith gets his characters into just such a state of torture—an agony brought on by some hasty act or sin, and then comes a period of purgatorial purification from which the soul comes forth perhaps sadder, but certainly wiser.

In all these pictures, Meredith evidently attempts to be absolutely correct. He undoubtedly is a true realist; but he discerns the fact that realism in itself is worthless unless through its truthfulness it brings forth certain bits of universal truth, or certain great general principles of life. But whether for all his truthfulness and earnestness, Meredith will ever have numerous literary disciples, or even an extensive reading, is very doubtful. As Chesterton has said in the article quoted in a previous page, "he was as human as Shakespeare, and also as affected as Shakespeare." To the tyrannical and all-important "average reader," the affectedness is entirely too prominent, and as it is with Browning, so it may be with Meredith: his theories and ideas may have to sift down to the general masses through the medium of a select body of enthusiasts.

THOMAS HARDY

In the magazine sketch mentioned twice in our study of Meredith, there is the following contrast between Meredith and Thomas Hardy (1840—): "Mr. Hardy

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is wholly of our own generation, which is a very unpleasant thing to be. He is shrill and not mellow. He does not worship the unknown God: he knows the God (or thinks he knows the God), and dislikes him. He is not a pantheist: he is a pandiabolist. The great agnostics of the Victorian Age said there was no purpose in nature. Mr. Hardy is a mystic; he says there is an evil purpose. All this is as far as possible from the plenitude and rational optimism of Meredith."

There is much truth in these statements. Hardy persistently asks us, after he has shown us a tortured victim of environment or heredity: "Is this the gentle mercy of your Nature and your Nature's God?" "Did this being come 'trailing clouds of glory' from your all loving Father?" The bitterness of his question lies in the fact that if we look about us at the wrecks of humanity—wrecks innocent of their own destruction—we can not answer him.

Hardy is the best English disciple of what we may term the school of naturalism in fiction. Fielding would not leave affairs to fate, but manipulated his plot to please himself—and Tom Jones; Dickens, in his kindness of heart, either brought early happiness or allowed his creatures to suffer and sacrifice so nobly that we are gratified with all the delayed rewards finally coming to them; Thackeray, while avoiding heroes, avoids also an outright answer to the personal responsibility of his sinners; George Eliot takes the trouble to tell exactly what a certain being does; but she fails to tell where he got a certain personality, and why that personality acts in this particular manner. The naturalistic novelist of the last decades of the nineteenth cen-

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tury considers all these methods rather immature and half hearted. This new student of life eliminates every hint of freedom from his characters; they cannot be held responsible; they are the victims of determinism. With just such a purpose in mind Hardy marshals his events in such a manner that fate seems animated and indeed raging with animosity and cruelty.

Now, it would seem that to picture fate in this mood Hardy should choose the complex life of the city, where far more often than in the country, men in their struggle against adversity, sin, and failure, become tinged with pessimism. Instead, Hardy chooses the peasant life of Wessex. Almost despairing of gaining the truth about the higher classes, whose souls are veneered with conventionality, he turns to these people so much closer to the earth, of whom he can give a direct description, and know it to be correct. With these as specimens of genuine humanity, he proceeds in the most pleasant of languages to tell the most unpleasant of truths. His pictures are realistic to the last detail; but they are as delicately tinted, as finished, as polished as masterly art can make them.

Note the underlying ideas of his greater stories. *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) deals with the seemingly fruitless striving of an individual against circumstances; *The Return of the Native* (1878), with its sinister touch and its vague pessimism, seems infused with the idea that life is a thing to be put up with as a rather lamentable fact than as a thing to be thankful for; *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) apparently enlarges upon the same idea; while *Jude, the Obscure* (1895) is so extremely suggestive of this view that Hardy repulsed by means of

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it many a former admirer. In such works we hear the note of ancient pagan fatalism—the note that in spite of two thousand years of Christian teaching still makes *Hamlet* and *Lear* so deeply expressive of our inner souls.

Tess is doubtless Hardy's most masterly piece of fiction. Here a woman falls as an innocent victim of circumstances, heredity, national and family traits. She sins and sins deeply; but Hardy contends for her absolute innocence. The gods are against her. She makes the wrong sort of marriage; in order to save her family she does what she knows to be wrong and hateful; a taint in her ancestry asserts itself in a moment of rashness, and she commits murder. Her death is a payment for a long series of evils running far back into the obscure past of her people. This is the fast-growing idea of the mighty power of the customs, habits, and thoughts of our forefathers upon us, their comparatively innocent victims—the undying, though often long-hidden power of what some thinkers are pleased to call the subconscious mind. To such an observer as Hardy, and in such themes as he chooses, the irony of fate is sure to be very evident. The wrong thing seems always to happen at the wrong time for Tess. Her most important letters are delayed; when, at a perilous hour, she seeks help at a certain home, she finds the family away; she meets her darker angel when he should have been elsewhere. The thought is forced home upon us: Here is a woman who, with all her sins, should stand blameless before God. It is pessimism of the deepest dye; the God whom Hardy sees does not offer the consolation of the Christian God. Indeed this novelist dis-

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cerns the fact that despite all our high talk of a Loving Father, we all, high and low, still worship as pagans. And, according to him, it is very well; for surely the worship of the sun and nature, he might contend, is as sane a religion as the worship of this strange modern God.

To such a man Nature must mean much. In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Tess*, and the others, the woods, the moors, the sunset are never used as mere backgrounds; but instead there is something of the ancient Anglo-Saxon personification of the things of Nature. Her various elements become almost dramatis personæ; the trees and the river look upon Tess with inquisitive and reproachful eyes; the moors and the plains awake like a vast monster from sleep; the external voice the soul of the thoughtful or tortured human being that stands so lonely among them.

All this, be it remembered, is expressed with a distinction of language rarely equaled in nineteenth-century prose. The very art of the message is liable to blind us to the hopelessness of that message. In our enchantment we are apt to overlook the fact that Hardy, while expressing much truth, is not telling the whole truth. We are not entirely slaves to Fate. We all feel a certain responsibility for our acts, and the very fact that we possess such a feeling is proof that we have the power to correct those tendencies which racial or family sins have thrust upon us. Surely we are not mere puppets in the hands of an arbitrary Manipulator; by our very *refusal to believe it* we show that we are not—mentally at least—helplessly enslaved. Nevertheless, think what we may about Hardy's tinge of

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pessimism, we must admit the searching keenness of his investigation of sin and its result, the powerful nature of his methods, the uncompromising attitude with which he faces truth, and, above all else, perhaps, the art with which he expresses his subtle and deeply suggestive thoughts.

STEVENSON

It is evident that the main tendency in nineteenth-century fiction was toward realism; and yet we almost close our study of the period with the most romantic novelist since Scott. Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) rejected the pessimism that in other writers had resulted from a cold, logical analysis of conditions and the underlying causes; he loved the element of chance in all adventures; he preferred to draw our wearied souls away from the burden of humdrum life, and to lead us out into the care-free realm of adventure and luck.

During all those years of the nineteenth century romance had not been dead. The "scientific" trend of all thought had simply caused realism to overshadow it. Even the realists possessed touches of the romantic; Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy were not chary of it; in the closing years of the century that masterly piece of fiction Du Maurier's *Trilby*, with all its realistic pictures was heavily tinged with romance. The novel of crime, or of human shrewdness pitted against crime, such as we find in Wilkie Collins and Conan Doyle, is oftentimes but a revised form of the Gothic type of old. Collins's *Woman in White* (1860), *The Moonstone* (1868), and others of the same nature,

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make extreme use of the mysterious, and the ingenuity required in withholding the explanation to the last chapter even surpasses the ingenuity used in inventing the ghosts, enchanted helmets, avenging skeletons, and talking portraits of the eighteenth century. The romances of Blackmore, Black, and William Morris have already been commented upon; they and their numerous imitators prove the permanence of the adventure-loving and the mystery-loving nature in the English-speaking people.

But beyond doubt the prince of these modern romancers is Robert Louis Stevenson. Critics whose mania is realism may rail at his lack of cold-blooded "inevitableness," and may declare that he, like Scott, set back fiction a half century; but luckily such critics are not the only readers of novels, and a vast multitude of readers of "R. L. S." find not only healthful, sane entertainment in his books, but also reasons for nobler opinions of mankind, and inspiration and hope for our ultimate victory over adversity and wrong. If he wrote stories that could not have happened, we are only sorry that they could not. After all, we should never forget that the novelist is under no obligation to attempt a solution of the riddle of the universe. A novel is first of all a *story*; any other element is but an accessory.

Your true realist abhors the very suggestion of chance; Stevenson loved it. From birth to death he was a boy, and he had a boy's keen passion for venturesome escapades and for primitive life with all its daring, hardships, freedom, and closeness to Nature. Adventure for its own sake was ever present. His heroes, while

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figuring in most hair-raising incidents, are the most lucky of men; they are the camels that go through the eye of the needle with only their hump of vanity slightly damaged. Like Poe, Stevenson feels under no necessity of turning these gratifying results into ethical lessons. "Oh, for a life on the Spanish Main!" he seems to cry; let psychology and moral preaching go hang. Apparently he could say, with Omar Khayyám:

Myself, when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door wherein I went.

In such a type of fiction love need not play an important part. Indeed, in *Treasure Island* (1883) and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) it is entirely absent, and yet what stories they are! His admirable ability in the use of action and suspense carries us on and on; while a certain Defoe-like display of accuracy makes the narrative seem "just so"; we could not possibly wish it to be otherwise. He adds to the apparent truthfulness of the tale by allowing one or two characters who were actually on the ground—or on deck—to tell it as they themselves saw it. That Stevenson could have been a realist is indicated partly by these touches of accurate description and detailed reporting, partly by the keen analysis of character in which he now and then indulged—such as those found in *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) and in *Kidnapped* (1886). That fine scene where Alan Breck, after killing his enemies, as they rush upon him in the roundhouse, and after putting his sword through their dead bodies, sits down

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and bursts forth into a victorious song, made up on the spur of the moment, is one of the most realistic and at the same time dramatic episodes in our literature.

Stevenson aided greatly in the modern revival of historical romance; but at no time did he seek the exactness which seems to be the pride of so many followers of this school. Imagination and fancy supplied his lack of historical research; he purposely avoided descriptions of battles that he could easily have pictured; but clear and hearty descriptions of social conditions in the old days he could present with all the impressiveness that either romanticist or realist could desire. *Kidnapped* and its sequel, *David Balfour*, are sufficient proof of his ability to make the past live in all its vivid colors.

Stevenson seems to have possessed a dual personality. As Dr. William Lyon Phelps says: "He was a combination of the Bohemian and the Covenanter; he had all the graces of the one and the bed-rock moral earnestness of the other; 'the world must one day return to the word "duty,"' said he, 'and be done with the word "reward."'" He was the incarnation of the happy union of virtue and vivacity." Puritanical in his own conduct, he could not but admire scamps if they were only reckless enough. Not their wickedness but their daring appealed to him. That he perceived and thoroughly understood the danger of such duality is proved, of course, in his *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. This may be romance; doubtless Meredith and Hardy were disdainfully sure it could not have happened; but nevertheless has anything nearer the truth ever been written in all the world's fiction? It illustrates one of the funda-

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mental principles of humanity's struggle toward righteousness: a little yielding is a dangerous thing.

All this is written in one of the most remarkable styles of the nineteenth century. Perhaps we should say one of the most remarkable *groups* of styles. For Stevenson made a subtle difference in his expression to agree with the peculiar character of each story. Read his main narratives from the earliest to the latest—*An Inland Voyage* (1878), *Travels with a Donkey* (1879), *Treasure Island* (1883), *The Silverado Squatters* (1884), *Kidnapped* (1886), *Dr. Jekyll* (1886), *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889)—and note how a certain distinction of style accompanies each one. Some one has spoken of the "homely, hushed phraseology" of *Dr. Jekyll*, "greatly enhancing the ghastly subject matter." The admirable fitness of his medium for the narrative is no less evident in the others. Stevenson has sometimes been criticized for displaying his style—for "strutting," as some would have it; yet extreme simplicity—a simplicity that harmonizes admirably with the primitive nature of many of his tales—is far more often found. That style was the result of immense experimental labor; its rhythm and its subtle beauty were the outcome of many a consciously toilsome hour.

His disciples and imitators have been numerous. The works of such men as S. R. Crockett, Stanley Weyman, Anthony Hope Hawkins, J. M. Barrie, John Watson, and Conan Doyle are testimonials of his abiding influence. That the influence is abiding may not be pleasing to certain authors and critics who would like to be looked upon as highly "scientific" in their observations and methods; but his influence seems destined to last

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long, nevertheless. Stevenson's whole-souled optimism is a stimulus to those who are sadly wise as to the realities of life; his own courage and his admiration for courage are contagious; he refused to look upon men as mere puppets manipulated upon a fatalistic stage. He found life a very happy thing.

GISSING

George Gissing (1857-1903) has frequently been dubbed "pessimist" and "abject realist." If by pessimist and realist be meant one who looks at life squarely, pictures it as it *is*, and refuses to cover a lamentable fact with a mask of optimism, Gissing must, indeed, be classed as such.

Doubtless the circumstances of George Gissing's life impelled him to the writing of books that make "somber reading." His earlier days were an unceasing struggle against poverty; and he was handicapped with a delicate physique. Some of his earlier writing was done in a cellar room with the light coming through a flat grating in an alley; money was so scarce that the finding of a sixpence on the street filled him with a sudden exultation never forgotten; the buying of a book often meant a bread-and-water diet for forty-eight hours. A prisoner among sordid scenes which to his naturally dreamy and (as some have declared) idealistic soul were utterly distasteful, he inevitably expressed the bitterness within him. Both he and Dickens—to whom he owed much—presented life as they really *saw* it; but they saw it in very different ways.

The result was what might have been expected. The Englishman and the American love the truth—espe-

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cially if it be about somebody else. They do not wax enthusiastic over presentations of the black facts of their own national life. Gissing, therefore, long had but a slender following. Look over the list of his novels and books of short stories: *Demos* (1886), *Thyrza* (1887), *A Life's Morning* (1888), *The Nether World* (1889), *New Grub Street* (1891), *The Odd Woman* (1893), *Eve's Ransom* (1895), *The Crown of Life* (1899); few indeed are those that gained a notably wide reading. This is not to the author's discredit; it reflects, rather, upon the nature of an audience which, apparently, was unwilling to face the painful truths about itself. Grim realist as Gissing may have been, he never looked upon the mere facts of existence as all in all. His books are not mere history; they are an interpretation of history as well, and, unlike Zola, he does not allow his reader to forget that at the same moment the beautiful was existing. One of his last books, *The Crown of Life*, is as full of spiritual uplift as many a novel written by an outright idealist. In *The Year of Jubilee* the monotony, the dulled emotions, the slow death of soul could have been portrayed only by a man whose heart had been stirred by the sordid life about him. *Eve's Ransom* might serve as another instance of the novelist's personal interest and sympathy for mankind. A man sacrifices himself for a girl; she accepts the sacrifice unthinkingly, gladly, and goes her way; he has left to him only the thorn of the rose. Yet, even here there is a touch of idealism; for Gissing shows the wounded man's realization that the pain was worth while, that the experience, the insight, the revelation of himself and of others are worth gaining. *The Crown of Life*, men-

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tioned above, indicates still more clearly his ever-growing tendency toward a more open expression of this idealism. Love is the crown; it is worth all the struggle, the sorrow, the agony of our earthly existence.

Two themes were always attractive to this clear-eyed observer: (1) the degrading effect of poverty; (2) the importance of culture. By culture Gissing did not at all mean mere education, mere accumulation of facts, about which there is so much British and American boasting in our day. He longed for a national Greek-like feeling and desire for the beautiful. Education and culture for their own sake and not for their money-making effects; that well-proportioned view of life which comes only from thinking about and associating with the noble,—these were subjects of genuine, heartfelt interest to him.

Necessary as culture is, Gissing points out that it is incompatible with poverty; and just here is the cause of much of the tragedy in modern life. But, says Gissing, there is tragedy worse than all this—the story of those who have the ability for intellectual growth and know it, and yet never reach a favorable environment for the fruitage. He seems almost to echo the words of Carlyle: “This, and this alone, I call a tragedy; that a soul should be born into this world with a capacity for knowledge, and should die out of it with the capacity undeveloped.” Gilbert Grail, the factory hand, with such capacity of mind and soul, is lifted for a moment into a view of that nobler life for which he yearns, and then is suddenly thrust down once more to his daily grind of soul-destroying toil. This is indeed the true pathos of modern industrial life.

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Through all the work of this grim realist runs a saving strain of idealism. The world, as Gissing sees it, is toilsomely but continuously creeping upward. In the novelist's own words, he tells "the story of those fathers whose lives are but a preparation for the richer lives of their sons."

Absolutely sincere, Gissing painted his pictures as he found their originals in the world about him; and at all times he distinguished fearlessly and clearly between the noble and the base. He chose his subjects, his viewpoints, his theories of life, and stoutly stood by them. A few concessions to the public desire for sentimentality and the "live happily ever afterward" ending might have brought him popularity and the cultured environment his nature craved. His artistic nature was too true for such a temptation; he felt too keenly "the sense of tears in mortal things."

MINOR NOVELISTS

What a host of novelists must necessarily go almost unnoticed! Anne Brontë (1819-1849), sister of Charlotte, and author of *Agnes Grey* and the *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*; Henry Kingsley, brother of Charles, and author of the Australian story, *Geoffrey Hamlyn*; George John Whyte Melville, author of the hunting novels, *Katerfelts* and *Black but Comely*; Thomas Love Peacock, author of *Headlong Hall*, *Nightmare Abbey*, and *Crochet Castle*; George MacDonald, author of *Robert Falconer* and *Alex Forbes*; Joseph Henry Shorthouse, author of *John Inglesant* and the poetical child story, *Little Schoolmaster Mark*; Lewis Carroll, author of the strange *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; Sir Walter

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Besant, author of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, and, with James Rice, of *The Golden Butterfly*; William Carleton, the author of *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* and the Irish famine tale, *Black Prophet*; Joseph Sheridan LeFann, author of two highly successful works, *Uncle Silas* and *In a Glass Darkly*; William Henry Giles Kingston, author of more than a hundred stories of the sea; William Harrison Ainsworth, author of *Old St. Paul's* and *The Tower of London*; G. P. R. James, the historical romancer whom Thackeray burlesqued so effectively; Samuel Warren, author of the once famous *Ten Thousand a Year*; Mrs. Henry Wood, author of *Mrs. Halliburton's Troubles* and the still popular *East Lynne*; Mrs. Marsh, author of *The Admiral's Daughter*; Anne Manning, author of the effective Milton story, *The Maiden and Married Life of Mary Powell*; Mrs. Norton, author of the stirring *Stuart of Dunleath*; Julia Kavanagh, author of *Madeleine*; Charlotte Tucker (A.L.O.E.—A Lady of England), author of the children's books, *Exiles in Babylon* and *House Beautiful*; Mrs. Ewing, author of *Remembrances of Mrs. Overthway*; Mrs. Charles, author of the famous Luther story, *The Schönberg-Cotta Family*; Mrs. Oliphant, author of the Eliot-like *Salem Chapel* and *Passages in the Life of Margaret Maitland*—these are but a few of the minor story-tellers who have been but briefly mentioned or totally neglected in our study.

It is plain that during the nineteenth century fiction voiced practically every emotion, idea, theory, or hobby that man might well have. It gained not only a respectability, but an influence undreamed of by Richardson and Fielding. In logical arrangement, accuracy,

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truthfulness to life, genuine earnestness, and artistic expression, it advanced more rapidly than the English stage of the century, and, in all but the artistic expression, as rapidly as British poetry of the period. The century began with a rivalry between the romanticism of Scott and the realism of Jane Austen, and it closed with a similar rivalry between the two methods. A friendly rivalry it was, however; for romance learned to keep more strictly within the boundaries of reason while realism learned to mingle the dreamy and even the mysterious with its attempts at rigidly accurate pictures. No one can doubt the ethical efficiency of the nineteenth-century novel. It laughed at hypocrisy, false pride, and vanity; it revealed and corrected the evils of its day; it made an earnest effort to throw some light on the philosophy of life. It questioned and it answered; it praised and it rebuked; it guided and it inspired. It apparently made an honest effort to destroy the half-gods that the true god might appear.

CHAPTER VIII

TWENTIETH-CENTURY FICTION

IN these first years of the twentieth century the novel and the short story have outstripped in popularity and importance all other forms of English literary work. While among some European nations the drama has made tremendous strides, and has become the rival of fiction in expressing philosophies, public sentiment, and critiques on life, it has not been so in Great Britain. The prose narrative now occupies the best creative genius of the Islands. Critics who are lovers of poetry look with pessimism upon this condition; but as we examine the earnest painstaking work of some of our living novelists, and observe how closely and how seriously they are endeavoring to reach into the very heart of modern life, we should not be disturbed lest the high standards of past literature be lowered.

In these latter days the desire for accuracy may indeed be in some danger of running to extremes. There seems to be a craze for exactness of detail. Your novelist, before writing a chapter, apparently hies himself to some particular section of the globe, photographs the people, their homes, their possessions, even to the ox in the barn, fills voluminous note-books, and, laden with minutiae returns home to write. There is some danger of producing a geography instead of a novel. The

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writer might have saved much of his time and money by staying at home and observing the general traits of humanity, the eternal truths, and the main motives and effects that can be found anywhere, and that, after all, make fiction worth while. But the tendency shows at least a commendable effort on the part of modern writers to take themselves and their art seriously.

IMPRESSIONISM

There is evident also in these days a desire to avoid covering in one book the heavens above, the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth. Picturing accurately a cross-section of life—this is the sum and substance of numerous contemporary novelists. Impressionism—the name sometimes applied to the method—is a sort of snap shot of existence, a bringing out of not all the phases of man's activities, but only those that make for the greatest intensity of impression at a given moment. This may mean a glorification of the commonplace, and, to its enemies, such writers seem to get most valiantly nowhere. The impressionistic method may be looked upon as the opposite of the George Eliot type of novel; for she began with the inner cause and worked outwardly to its effect upon the character and his deeds, while the true impressionist seizes upon the individual's appearance and manners, and works inwardly to the quality of his or her soul. Whether the true state of the character's soul is ever pictured by such a method, or whether the picture given is simply the author's conjecture based upon certain external facts, is an open question; but the fact remains that we all are compelled to gain our estimate of any

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human being by just such a method. In this type of fiction the idea of physical reward for goodness and punishment for sin does not necessarily enter. Marriage, as a reward, for instance, is decidedly absent. Thus, in James's *The Tragic Muse*, a painter wishes to marry a female politician and a diplomat wishes to marry an actress; but the author has the actress marry a very poor actor, and considers this far better morality than allowing her to marry a diplomat, with whose ideas and ambitions she has nothing in common. Finally, the impressionistic novel is generally short. It is an episode cut by the author's scissors from the book of life.

FRENCH INFLUENCES

The influence of French theories is exceedingly evident in the fiction of the more painstaking writers of contemporary fiction. Fielding, Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, and George Eliot simply could not keep themselves out of their stories; when they were inspired with a preachment, the plot had to wait until the sermon had been expressed. To-day, our better artists are endeavoring, with some success, to separate themselves from their plot, to allow the story to unroll itself without interruptions, to let the tale, by its very impressiveness, do its own preaching. Flaubert once said, "I do not believe that the artist should express his opinion on anything in the world. He may communicate it, but I would not have him speak it. . . . Hence I limit myself to a rendering of things as they appear to me, to an expression of what seems to me true, let the consequences be what they will." It has been a hard

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lesson for the Anglo-Saxon to learn; but there are indications in some of our contemporary fiction that the idea is slowly gaining credence.

From the French, also, we have gained another tendency—a doubtful gain, according to many critics. Our modern novelist is claiming the right to discuss anything or any phase of a thing. The result is that some of our “problem novels” are probing into affairs that, in the opinion of the old fashioned, might better be left to a meeting of a State Association of Physicians and Surgeons, or indeed to the lecturer at the dissecting table. But the ethical or religious uplift in some modern masterpieces of fiction has so far counterbalanced this tendency. Barrie’s *Auld Licht Idylls*, Watson’s *Beside the Bonnie Briar-Bush*, and Benson’s *Beside Still Waters* have a sweetness, a sanity, a healthfulness about them that contradict any idea that morbid curiosity as to sexual relationships is the most popular trait in contemporary fiction.

MC CARTHY. LANG

The number of living novelists is of course too great to admit of more than a glance at their names and main productions. Their work is indeed too recent to allow of a just estimate of its worth; in future years readers might wonder why their names were mentioned at all. Of the permanence of some of these contemporaries there can, however, be no reasonable doubt. Justin McCarthy (1830—), dramatist, novelist, historian, and poet, long since established his fame with such stories as *Marjorie*, *The Dryad*, *The Flower of France*, and *The Illustrious O’Hagan*, and that in his old age he has lost

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none of the dramatic quality so characteristic of his fiction is evidenced in his recent delineation of the typical Irish swash-buckler in *The O'Flynn*. Andrew Lang (1844—), another poet, historian, essayist, and fiction-writer, still composes with zest, and in his old age seems destined to exhaust the rainbow with such works as the *Green Fairy Book*, the *Blue Fairy Book*, the *Yellow Fairy Book*, etc.

WATSON. BARRIE

John Watson (Ian Maclaren) (1850–1909), who left his task at a moment when an admiring public was expecting masterly work of him, showed in such volumes as *Beside the Bonnie Briar-Bush*, *The Days of Auld Lang Syne*, and *Kate Carnegie*, a purity of sentiment, a religious emotion, the almost stubborn character of the Scot, softened by love of the spiritual, the homely humor and unassumed pathos of his native land, in such a winsome manner that he drew the world toward him. His fellow countrymen, James Matthew Barrie (1860—) and Samuel Rutherford Crockett (1860—), have pictured with equal charm the plain, strong, fervent folk of the Border-land and Highlands. Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls* showed what genius could do with a seemingly commonplace and uninteresting field, and gained for the author a popularity that has been vastly increased by his other Scotch stories, such as *When A Man's Single*, *A Window in Thrums*, *The Little Minister*, and *Sentimental Tommy*. "His all-powerful tool is the sense of humor. It enables him to interpret life sanely and wisely, and at the same time joyously; it teaches him to construct plots delightful in

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their unexpectedness, and helps him to write witty lines."¹ But back of this humor is a sympathy born of a cheerful trust in mankind. Constantly he is reminding us that in the midst of this rushing, careless, seemingly cruel world are a multitude of little, everyday, thoughtful acts of kindness and love. He seems to have a woman's intuition for understanding, the woman's "unutterable reason," the feminine "because." His is not a strenuous, intensive art or expression; it does not strike one like a pile-driver, but gently pervades our consciousness with a sense of undeniable truth. "Whatever [he] writes is literature, because he dwells islanded amidst the world in a wise minority of one. . . . He has achieved individuality and thereby passed out of hearing of the ticking of clocks into an ever-everland where dates are not, and consequently epitaphs can never be."²

CROCKETT

Crockett in his tales, *The Stickit Minister*, *The Raiders*, *The Men of the Moss Hags*, *Cleg Kelly*, *The Black Douglas*, and *Me and Myn*, is more dramatic than his fellow Scotchmen, and uses events as stirringly, or as theatrically, as Scott. His recent work, *The Men of the Mountain* (1909), dealing with the Franco-Prussian War, is, however, placed upon a more real basis of life, and the vividness is not injured by any suggestion of exaggeration. These three writers, with their sympathetic descriptions of the environment, habits, and modes of thought of their country, and with their keen appreciation of the brave spirit that has upheld their

¹ *Outlook*, Vol. 91, p. 54.

² *Forum*, Vol. 41, p. 137.

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homeland through many a trial, have made Scotland known and beloved throughout the world as never before.

MRS. WARD

A novelist just now attracting international attention is Mrs. Humphry Ward (1851—), author of *Robert Elsmere*, *Marcella*, *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, *Lady Rose's Daughter*, *Fenwick's Career*, *Marriage à la Mode*, *Lady Merton*, *Colonist*, and numerous other books. It is certain that no other woman except George Eliot and possibly the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and very few men of the nineteenth century, have had a wider reading.

Clinging rather to the old-fashioned type than to the later psychological, she nevertheless reflects the new tendencies in thought that have entered since George Eliot ceased to write. She believes thoroughly in "higher criticism" in religion and everything else, and she does not hesitate to promulgate her ideas about a world that is "out of joint." She is emotional, and, as Chesterton says of Hardy, she is shrill at times. In such works as *Marcella*, where she unhesitatingly looks into the sources and ultimate results of our social theories; in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, which deals with a devout Catholic's struggle with modern skepticism; in *Lady Rose's Daughter*, where some questions of personal ethics are boldly discussed; in these and others of her books she may at times exaggerate; but she is so intensely, so extremely in earnest, that many readers have no inclination to ridicule her.

Mrs. Ward is distinctly Anglo-Saxon in tempera-

ment. Energetic, purposeful, always willing to fight for a cause, with an abiding faith in the doctrine of race-conscience, she might be a power for good could she look upon life more steadily and calmly, and as a whole. But her heroine, to use the heroine's own words, generally wants "more life, *more* life, even if it lead to agony and tears," and the result of all this comes dangerously near hysteria. These heroines almost invariably absorb our attention; so, however, does the tigress in the circus cage. Self-willed, dissatisfied, rushing on to success or destruction, they are always better delineated than the male characters, who are generally mere men and sometimes hardly that. This portrayal of feminine natures, a certain distinction of style, and the positiveness with which the view-point is presented have gained Mrs. Ward a wide and an enthusiastic following among the less critical; but to the more discriminating the strain of melodrama and the over fervid, not to say violent, nature of much of her work are a distinct barrier.

That she makes mistakes of course goes without saying. A visit to America resulted in her *Marriage à la Mode*, a book eagerly awaited by Americans, but which turned out to be a melodramatic tract on the divorce problem, with an Irish-Spanish heroine. Another result of the visit was *Lady Merton, Colonist*, in which, with certainly a lack of the admired modern inevitableness, an aristocratic lady and a drunkard's self-made son are brought together and of course married. Despite these lapses in art, Mrs. Ward rarely fails to reveal a certain distinction of style and a delineation of characters not surpassed by many of her contemporaries during the more than thirty years of her literary life.

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HALL CAINE

The critical world is undeniably divided as to the merits of Hall Caine (1853—). Admirers point out the immense virility and dramatic power of his stories; enemies make cynical remarks about a similar virility and coloring in circus posters. Beginning with *The Shadow of a Crime* in 1895, and following this with such successful tales as *A Son of Hagar*, *The Deemster*, *The Bondsman*, *The Christian*, *The Eternal City*, and *The Prodigal Son*, he has presented a picture of life as vigorous as any ever portrayed by Scott, and certainly stronger in character delineation.

There is a note of gloomy tragedy in much that he has written—a weirdness indeed that at times reminds one of the eighteenth-century Gothic romance. He has the ability to lead up to intense climaxes, and this, with the great amount of physical animation, violent clashes of will, and high emotional pitch, makes his novels admirably adapted to staging. Far more than in Scott the ethical purpose is present; despite the gloomy touches of the Northland, so frequently felt in his stories, Hall Caine leaves the reader with a bolder belief in the might of the right. He may not possess the inevitableness and the accurate psychology that the realists desire; but the appeal he makes to the emotions, the virility of his characters, and the dark splendor he casts about them are not easily forgotten.

MINOR NOVELISTS

It might be interesting, had we the space of Fielding's *Tom Jones* or Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, to give

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special attention to all these writers of the light or serious phases of life. We may but mention the comfortably old-fashioned, romantic stir of *A Gentleman of France*, *Under the Red Robe*, and *In King's Byways* of Stanley Weyman (1855—); the Orientally fantastic, weird, and literally hair-raising romance found in *King Solomon's Mines*, *She*, *The People of the Mist*, and *The Morning Star* by Rider Haggard (1856—); the good-natured leisureliness—or laziness—of *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, *Three Men in a Boat*, and *The Diary of a Pilgrimage*, or the humorous domestic descriptions of the recent *They and I* by Jerome K. Jerome (1859—); the exciting swash-buckler methods of Max Pemberton (1863—) in such novels of the good old Scott and Cooper type as *The Sea Wolves*, *Pro Patria*, *The House under the Sea*, and *The Diamond Ship*; the extravagant ranting of Marie Corelli in her *Sorrows of Satan*, *The Murder of Delicia*, and *God's Good Man*; the breezy, Scott-like romance of *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *The God in the Car*, and *Rupert of Hentzau*, by Anthony Hope Hawkins (1863—); and the mingling of humor, cynicism, pathos, realism, and romance in *Children of the Ghetto*, *They that Walk in Darkness* and *Merely Mary Ann* by Israel Zangwill (1864—).

MAURICE HEWLETT

Maurice Hewlett (1861—) is a novelist commanding wide attention in these first years of the twentieth century. As far back as 1895 he produced a little book of charming prose entitled *Earthwork Out of Tuscany*. Three years later came *The Forest Lovers*, a story which rang true, and which the people received gladly. When

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Richard Yea and Nay was issued, Mr. Hewlett stood a recognized master of historical romance. His pen has worked rapidly since 1895, and such volumes as *Little Novels of Italy*, *The Queen's Quair*, *New Canterbury Tales*, *The Road in Tuscany*, *The Fool Errant*, *The Stooping Lady*, *Halfway House*, *Open Country*, *Rest Harrow*, and *The Song of Renny* have convinced many readers that his is an abiding genius in fiction.

Not all readers, however, have found such a genius in him. Milton Bronner in his book on Hewlett declares *Richard Yea and Nay* "magnificent but none the less a failure," and *The Forest Lovers* "directly responsible for a school of cardboard mediæval fiction." Others have severely criticized him for the ethics of sex relationship exploited in his three later stories, *Open Country*, *Halfway House* and *Rest Harrow*. Nevertheless, as Bronner says, "In the main Mr. Hewlett's women are good women. They are loyal and loving, ready alike to take beatings and kissings."

ARNOLD BENNETT

Arnold Bennett (1865—) has said, "The greatest makers of literature are those whose vision is widest and whose feeling has been most intense; their lives are one long ecstasy of denying that the world is a dull place." The latter part of this statement might well be applied to Bennett. His experience as a journalist imbued him, just as in the case of Dickens, with a curiosity to know and understand mankind, and the result, as shown in such stories as *Helen with the High Hand*, *Buried Alive*, *Anna of the Five Towns*, *Old Wives' Tale*, *Clayhanger* and *Hilda Lessways* is the conviction that life is decid-

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edly somber sometimes, decidedly humorous at other times, and decidedly interesting all the time. When occasion demands, as in *Old Wives' Tale* and *Clayhanger*, he uses a relentless realism that is almost oppressive. In the little field chosen by Bennett—the “Five Towns”—there may be narrowness, lack of the cultural and artistic, a surplus of the monotonous; but there is undeniably the charm of individuality. And though these people may *happen* to live in such an environment, their traits are none the less universal.

“Arnold Bennett . . . has made the discovery, which Balzac made before him, that there is no cleavage between life and romance, but that, properly speaking, life is romance. . . . He has contrived to combine French vivacity and force of feeling with British morality and self-poise. . . . He has the *time-spirit* in the best of his work, which will withstand the rust of time.”^{2a}

These writers have interested and entertained a reading public of immense numbers; but only a few of them have reached far down into the depths of life in such an impressive manner as to insure lasting fame. Perhaps of them all Zangwill, Hewlett, and Bennett have come nearest to that masterly view of important phases of life such as we expect of true genius.

CONAN DOYLE

In inventive power and ingenuity few men of the nineteenth or twentieth century have excelled Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the famous Sherlock Holmes stories. It is reported that Doyle is sometimes

^{2a} Coningsby Dawson in *Book News Monthly*, 1911, pp. 567-9.

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chagrined that he should be more noted for these detective tales than for his more deep and serious productions, such as *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of the Four*, *The White Company*, and *The Great Shadow*; but it is nevertheless probable that his most lasting fame will be based on those tales of intrigue and shrewd scheming, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. In spite of the doctor-novelist's efforts to kill off the astute detective, the people will not let the hero die, but call again and again for his return.

Doyle, like Dumas, owes much to Poe in this business of making and solving riddles. There may not be any great amount of the philosophy of life in such efforts; the author may not have opportunities to show a varied delineation of characters; but that supreme skill and great technical art may be displayed in such work has been proved by both Poe and Doyle. And it should be remembered that this continued study of one hero may result in a character of permanent literary value. Sherlock Holmes is to-day as living a personality to hundreds of thousands of readers as Pickwick or Becky Sharp. Moreover, this vivid relating of but one episode at a time in the character's life makes the narrative a perfect specimen of the short story, a type that differentiates itself rather strictly from the novel, not by its shortness, but by the fact that it reviews only one of the critical moments in a life. Conan Doyle in his conciseness, his vividness, his logical, closely woven plots, his use of the mysterious, his ingenious solutions, and his knowledge of what to leave out, will probably long be considered a master of the short-story form.

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WRITERS OF VERY RECENT FAME

With the exception of Kipling, the writers now to be discussed are of very recent fame. Because, therefore, of the lack of that proper perspective gained only by the intervention of years, it is deemed best to add to my own views some criticisms from various literary periodicals. The reader might find it of interest to gather views of this sort about nearly all the novelists mentioned in this chapter, and thus discover for himself what the true consensus of public opinion is concerning these "new lights." It should constantly be borne in mind that the following criticisms are *personal* opinions, and may not by any means agree with the views of all other students of English fiction.

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS

Herbert George Wells (1866—) in his early work surprised the English-speaking world with his puzzling ingenuity and is surprising it no less to-day by his puzzling investigations of our present social structure. How matter-of-fact the eighteenth-century romances become when compared with *The Stolen Bacillus and Other Stories*, *The War of the Worlds*, *When the Sleeper Wakes*, *In the Days of the Comet* and *The War in the Air*! Wells is a graduate of a technical school, and his scientific knowledge enables him to give a tone of reality to his wildest marvels that almost causes the reader to believe in their future possibility. There is a daring about some of this man's conceptions that well-nigh staggers us; we are taken out beyond the confines of dimensions and time.

Wells now classifies his stories as romances and novels.

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The romances are, of course, the strange narratives mentioned above. In his novels he comes down to ordinary life—very ordinary life indeed. Wells has a hearty contempt for the *bourgeoisie*, and, as he is a socialist, he does not hesitate to show what a wretch a man may become under the pressure of modern social circumstances. He maintains that the failure of the present social system is largely due to the ascendancy of those who inherit wealth, and added to this, in his opinion, is the fact that progress is clogged by a “multitude of impotent folk,” who have no ideal, who do not know what they want, and who merely exist restlessly. In *Tono-Bungay* Wells strikes bitterly at the English tradition of the wealth-inheriting class, the tradition that a certain family must be kept in luxurious leisure at the expense of the common folk because such has always been the case.

To Wells there appears an even more serious menace. The new wealth, acquired by dubious means, is rapidly buying up the inherited feudalistic power, and in these raw, often vulgar, new masters the novelist finds “no promise of fresh vitality for the kingdom.” He is not chary of hard blows when discussing these products of modern economic conditions; in spite of their humor, such stories as *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, *Kipps*, and *Mr. Polly* are almost depressing in their delineation of contemptible vulgarity and meanness. And Wells himself seems almost depressed when he notes London’s “immense effect of Purposelessness,” how its millions demand and obtain so little of life, how they grope without an ideal. In his earlier work this writer has furnished reading for the romantic reader; he now of-

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fers more solid food for the thinker; which the distant future will prefer, is an open question.

It is generally difficult for an author to get away from his earlier work. Since several of Wells's first stories dealt with the grotesque and bizarre, many readers still persist in looking upon him as a kind of English Jules Verne. But even such stories as *The Time Machine*, *When the Sleeper Wakes*, *The Invisible Man*, and *The War of the Worlds*, besides being decidedly unlike the Verne productions in that they have a basis of scientific truth, also use science as a means of prophecy and warning to an extent unknown to the Frenchman. These fantastic tales, however, do not seem to represent the real trend of Wells's genius. We have indicated that *Love and Mr. Lewisham* is a genuinely human document; *Kipps: The Story of a Simple Soul* a masterly portrayal of certain phases of British society; and *Tono-Bungay*, an almost irritatingly realistic picture of the irrational structure of modern social life. Wells's *New Machiavelli* is a still more bitter story of life as it is, a treatise rather than a piece of fiction, a narrative that leaves the reader a disturbed questioner. Taking up phase after phase of our present restlessness, Wells has become what we might term a "social biologist." He is himself a questioner; he contradicts himself; he sees so much wrong that he cannot write beautifully for writing honestly. Some day, doubtless, out of all these energetic, vehement, bitter descriptions, views, and reflections he will weld a homogeneous work that shall stand as a masterpiece, not only of fiction, but of social portrayal. For he is an idealist talking in realistic terms.

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“He is a diagnostician of the symptoms of the growing pains of our uneasy times—an interpreter of the shifts to which men and women find themselves reduced by the struggles of the present in the swaddling clothes of the past. . . . There is no one now writing English fiction who deals with such stark and clean frankness with those essentials which the Victorian Era agreed to eliminate by the simple process of never mentioning them above a whisper. There is on the whole no one in the field who sheds more light where so much light is needed.”³

“[His Imagination] has been fired by the topsyturvy spectacle of man’s powers over nature being indefinitely increased by science, while his powers over himself have been diminished by the irruption of incalculable new forces. What needs putting under the laws of science, in short, is modern man himself, and Mr. Wells is the only English novelist who, with large and democratic sympathies, has perceived that a civilization that is guided by the jerry-built ideals of an ignorant democracy and of plutocratic cunning is running counter to the laws of social health.”⁴

“He is not always the purest of artists, and his analysis is not always free from bias, but his criticisms of the topsyturvydom of pragmatism and folly are fundamentally and everlastingly true.”⁵

“The bigger the problem the more eagerly he attacks

³ Quoted from the *New York Times* in *Current Literature*, Vol. 50, p. 451.

⁴ Edward Garnett as quoted by G. W. Harris, *Review of Reviews*, Vol. 40, p. 508.

⁵ Harris, *Ibid.*

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it. . . . He is . . . in deadly earnest, and out of his innumerable blows upon the present state of education, of political life, of social life, many are bound to hit their mark and to leave our ears ringing.”⁶

A. C. BENSON

Two brothers who are writing with an art that is decidedly promising are Arthur Christopher Benson (1862—) and Edward Frederic Benson (1867—). Arthur Benson is beyond contradiction one of the most potent forces in contemporary English literature. Those who have read *The Upton Letters*, *From a College Window*, and *Beside Still Waters* know what a depth of repose, what a love for nature, what a regard for the old, the traditional, the things that have been tried and found true, rest in this man. He comes to us with the calming voice so acutely needed in this day of mad hastening and loud-mouthed turmoil. Calling a halt to our feverish rushing hither and thither, he shows the emptiness of our soul-killing struggle for position, wealth, and fame. Many readers have discovered in his works a certain weariness of the world of activities; but while this and a tinge of sadness may be present, he never speaks as a pessimist.

The sanity of the man is refreshing. Long a master at Eton, he talks or rather meditates with an air of authority, with a quality born of an aristocracy of culture. And yet while his personality shines through every page, Benson never thrusts his opinions upon one; always his frankness and his “sweet reasonableness” overpower us and induce us to become his disciples long

⁶ *Current Literature*, Vol. 50, p. 452.

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before the book is closed. His is a strong intellect, mellowed by understanding and intense sympathy. Meditations on moods—these are his themes; indeed these make his books more nearly essays than novels, and yet they are stories of a soul. They are the introspective reviews of a high-minded man's spiritual progress—a man with a deep-seated interest in the esthetic and the ethical, and one who would have all other men interested also. It would seem to be a hopeless task to lure the "average reader" to these higher realms of thought; but Arthur Benson does it with a style as persuasive as any written by the great masters of nineteenth-century prose. Whether the world increase its mad gait, or whether it become calmer, his books are of a sorely needed type,—in the one case to warn, in the other to delight.

"Mr. [Arthur] Benson is of a sensitive, reflecting, confiding temperament which shrinks from whatever is brusque and rough and uncompromising. He is not really effeminate, but boyish, eager, ingenuous. There is an air of wistfulness about his confidences which is very winning. . . . He has the balancing instinct, his imagination is sufficiently flexible to bring the for and the against into sometimes embarrassing juxtaposition. . . . The fault that must be found in Mr. Benson's work as a whole is precisely that it is inconclusive, very amiable, very engaging, very helpful to people who stand in need of a mild sedative; but not really stimulating, not really . . . convincing. . . . If Mr. Benson has no robust philosophy of life, if he is not quite fitted to be the spiritual father of a flock, he has, more than any of his contemporaries, the faculty of intimate discourse,

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of winning sympathy through frank and human confession.”⁷

“He is not a preacher; he is essentially an artist. He lets the truth enforce itself. His endeavor is to set it forth with perfect sincerity and with vivid charm. He is reverent of the traditions of the past, but not in any sense a slave to their authority. . . . (He) sees life sanely and with warm human sympathies, and envelops his readers in an atmosphere of rest and thoughtfulness, in a style at once fluent, accurate, and beautiful without over-emphasis or exaggeration.”⁸

“He is without the slightest stretch of the imagination one of the potent forces to-day in English literature. . . . Mr. Benson expresses a great thought in great language with consummate ease. . . . Mr. Benson tries to sanctify suffering. . . . He is convinced of the necessity of closer acquaintance with it. . . . [His work] is the essence of a mellowed intellect; the keener for the classic association; the tenderer for the human feeling. . . . Somehow, by an almost supernatural instinct he sees into the soul of the struggling man and woman and discovers its bareness. And having seen its destitution, he covers it tenderly with the unction from his well of sympathy.”⁹

E. F. BENSON

E. F. Benson has much the same fine poetic nature, coloring, and quiet charm as his brother; but his humor and gaiety are more evident. *Mammon and Co., The*

⁷ H. W. Boynton, *Bookman*, Vol. 26, pp. 305-307.

⁸ *Outlook*, Vol. 85, p. 399.

⁹ Matthew Cripps, *Book News Monthly*, Vol. 27, p. 659.

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Princess Sophia, *The Image in the Sand*, *The Angel of Pain*, and *A Reaping* are books that have brought not only entertainment, but soul-satisfaction to many a reader. Notice for a moment this last-mentioned book, *A Reaping*. How the strife and the bitterness of the world are forgotten in these pages! An unselfish man is married to an unselfish woman; each is a perfect complement to the other. The daily moods, the quiet happiness, the fullness of their domestic peace are depicted with a beauty that teaches us, not what we are, alas, but what we might be. With such a theme goes a love of nature that brings new life to the pent-up soul. Sadness is not absent; death enters this domestic heaven; but the shadows go in and out through the sunlight so silently, so softly, that we come forth from a reading of the book filled and strengthened with a new satisfaction and a firm belief that all might be well if we would but have it so. Can the helpfulness of such work in this day of shrillness be denied?

If space permitted, much might be said of the merits of such new writers as John Collis Snaith, author of *Broke of Covenden*, *Patricia at the Inn* and *The Wayfarer*; we might tarry to speak of the strength and symbolism of John Trevena's Dartmoor stories, *Heather* and *Furze the Cruel*; or we might try to explain the intricate wheel-within-a-wheel method of William De Morgan, whose *Joseph Vance*, *Alice for Short*, *Somehow Good*, and *It Never Can Happen Again* are such a skilful mingling of the ludicrous and the pathetic, and whose people seem not created but simply transferred from life to the printed book.

Three novelists whose books have already a wide read-

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ing on both sides of the Atlantic, and whose artistic powers are still developing are Eden Phillpotts (1862—), William John Locke (1863—), and Sir Arthur T. Quiller-Couch (1863—).

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

Eden Phillpotts's first notable success came with his *Children of the Mist*. Here he had found his atmosphere. In the Dartmoor district of Devonshire with its ancient ruins, its almost prehistoric stone bridges, and its sudden elevations or "tors," as the plain people there call them, he found a landscape and a folk that he could love. Whenever he has departed from these—as in his seaport story, *The Haven*—he has done work of an inferior quality. That Phillpotts is in close sympathy with the Devonshire scenes and people is always evident. John Trevena, living in the same region, and describing the same peasantry, has written in his earlier work as an alien, as one not quite, but wanting to be, in full sympathy with them; Phillpotts identifies himself with his neighbors. The very title of his first highly successful book, *Children of the Mist*, is symbolic of the immature characters with whom he walks and talks daily.

In this book, in *The River*, *The Mother of the Man*, *My Devon Year*, *The Folk Afield*, and in all the others dealing with the moors about his home, he seems intensely impressed with the effect of environment upon a soul's growth. It is through their surroundings that he analyzes with such subtle psychology the moods and the intellect of his people. It is this that gives the touches of solemnity, the mystery, the weirdness, the tender-

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ness, and the tragedy to his tales. Phillpotts is honestly and always realistic; but the pessimism or cynicism that so often accompanies realism is foreign to his nature. As he looks out upon the simple folk wandering over the moorland, he cannot believe that they are essentially debased, inherently wicked; they are but undeveloped, but "children of the mist."

"He is a minor Thomas Hardy, but much more. He has a like joy in the face and heart of the earth, and he gets very close to the secret that remains hers, however we try to surprise it. . . . Mr. Phillpotts gives us noble landscapes, honest, faithful, impressive, which he clearly does from loving to do them, and which are as far as could be from what a simpler age than this used to prize as 'word-painting.' . . . But they do not take the eye or hold the memory like those counterfeit presentments of people in which he excels. . . . He makes them so true that you have only to go to your own knowledge of yourself and of others for the proof of them. . . . Nobody is quite like him in his skill of realizing them. . . . He penetrates recesses of the heart not hitherto explored and deals with fresh surface facts of life in a way he seems to have found out for himself. The mystery of art as of life is in the static things; to them we go back and rest and refresh ourselves in them after the moving forces have swept us helpless to the end. It is in the abundance of these static things that the lasting charm of this new great novelist exists."¹⁰

"Two qualities are more noticeable in Mr. Phillpotts's work. . . . There is an intimate and loving com-

¹⁰ W. D. Howells, *North American Review*, 1910, pp. 15-22.

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prehension of the beauties of nature, even an ardent glorying in them, and a keen sense of the innate dignity of the human soul. . . . Mr. Phillpotts is a master of word-painting of landscape; among the best of those now writing there are few who equal him. . . . A different village is the scene of each separate book, but the sort of people remains the same. . . . It is in the portrayal of the completed type that he excels; even among his leading characters in several books there are but three who develop and progress in spiritual change or growth before our eyes. This of course is in itself a falling short of true greatness in the creative artist, but it is a sign of power in Mr. Phillpotts's writing that his characters hold our interest even though they are so true to themselves that we know just what to expect of them after we have become thoroughly acquainted with them."¹¹

W. J. LOCKE

W. J. Locke has written some remarkable character novels in his *Derelicts*, *The Usurpers*, *The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne*, *The Beloved Vagabond*, and *Simon the Jester*. Unlike Trevena and Phillpotts, he is not particular as to his environments; London or any other city where an abundance of social life, political activities, and contrasting types of men may be found, suits his purpose. In *Simon the Jester*, for instance, we find a strange mingling of business and social life, with a circus performer introducing a third form of existence, and these, with an inspiring love theme and a man's battle against ill health and seemingly certain

¹¹ Grace Colborn, *Forum*, Vol. 39, pp. 543-545.

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death, make up a story full of animation and keen interest. Locke has the ability to shade off his humor into pathos—to cause laughter to melt into tears and distress to rise into happiness. These are, of course, worthy gifts; but his power in the art of creating characters that stand forth with living personality—this is likely to cause him to be remembered long after many of his fellow novelists. For the ability to add an original character to the galaxy of vividly real figures in literature is a pretty fair indication of long fame.

“Mr. Locke’s best work is in his men. In five books he has created a blood brotherhood of five—various in outward circumstances and the accidents of fortune, but one in spirit. They are gentle, philosophic, chivalrous vagabonds from the conventions of the world they live in. One and all they avoid the humdrum responsibilities which a stereotyped society imposes on present-day sons of men; and one and all, when crises come they rise to the heights. They are of the tribe of Quixote, great souls presenting to the eyes of a weary world the guise of suitable lunatics. . . . The comment . . . has been made that Locke’s stories are impossible. It is quite true, the chilly, flavorless element of possibility is wanting; but something much finer takes its place. It is quite true that people and events like this do not happen; but they ought to. . . . Mr. Locke does not bother himself about reality, he is concerned only with the truth. . . . He is an optimist, not because he is blind to the evil in the world but because he sees so much that is good and sees it so desirable. He has the fine gift of making virtue attract-

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ive, which is so much more worth while than making vice hideous." ¹²

"A rebellious vein of romanticism, a love of the Quixotic, a tender chivalry, an indulgent irony; these are some of the qualities possessed by his most characteristic volumes. . . . What ultimately happens to his characters is of minor consideration; what they think and say and do from day to day makes up the vital interest. . . . His heroes are often purposely, extravagantly, incredibly Quixotic. . . . And the fact that the reader accepts their most preposterous actions with equanimity and even with approval is Mr. Locke's sufficient justification. . . . It is with a mist before the eyes and laughter in the soul that one reads many of the best pages of Mr. William John Locke." ¹³

"He has peopled the realms of his fancy with living, breathing, sentient creatures. . . . Their doings, their sayings, their very thoughts have an almost startling verisimilitude, despite the fact that the protagonists of his dramas are invariably among the oddest, most quaintly freakish and fantastical strangers to conventionality of all the heroes of English fiction. . . . Indeed, he gives freer rein to his own idiosyncrasies than any other living story-teller with whose work I happen to be acquainted." ¹⁴

QUILLER-COUCH

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, better known as "Q," is famous among American readers as a story-writer; but

¹² *Outlook*, Vol. 99, p. 259.

¹³ Frederic Taber Cooper, *Bookman*, Vol. 24, pp. 602-604.

¹⁴ G. W. Harris, *Review of Reviews*, Vol. 41, pp. 376-377.

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England knows him favorably as critic, essayist, and poet also. Of Cornish blood, he loves the Celtic weirdness, mysticism, romance, fire, and wit, and probably his best work has been done in dealing with these traits as he has found them in the seamen of Cornwall. *Troy Town*, *The Delectable Duchy*, *From a Cornish Window*, and many another volume have made the romantic corners and the quaint characters of these shut-in, cliff-surrounded harbors familiar to all the English-speaking world.

But Quiller-Couch has the versatility, as well as the other qualities of the Cornish; he does not confine his themes to the seaports about his home nor to the fishermen with whom he mingles daily. In two recent works, for instance, *True Tilda* and *Lady Good-for-Nothing*, he writes as a man might who had spent his life in London or in some New England town. *Tilda*, injured in a circus, and confined for months in a hospital, effects the reunion of a father and his son, and in her resulting contact with wealth and refinement, develops into an intelligent and fascinating young lady. This is far away from Cornwall, but *Lady Good-for-Nothing* is still farther. Here a strong love theme links a New England girl of colonial days with a British official, and the unfailing interest and the vivid pictures of Puritan life in America make it one of Q's best.

The wit of Quiller-Couch is now a matter of world-wide information. It is not a wit based merely upon a humorous jingling of words; it is founded on a broad observation and a wide knowledge of many sorts and conditions of men. "I love to smoke and listen to other men's opinions," he once said; and he has listened

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with understanding and sympathy. Add to this wit and this understanding of humanity a stirring plot, incisive characterization, an ability to picture land and sea with the sureness of an artist, a spiritual insight that in his serious moments touches the reader's soul with its truthfulness, and we have the reasons for believing that the name of "Q" will be familiar to many future generations of English-speaking readers.

"Quiller-Couch's writing is imbued with the poetry and mysticism of his race, and when he writes of the Cornish people and their strange characteristics he seems to transport us into their midst." ¹⁵

"Both in matter and in manner he stands alone, and it would be hard to say whether one more admires the individuality and freshness of his natural gift as a raconteur or the rare mastery of technique which shapes and gives the perfect finish to his work. In this last respect one cannot but be struck by the air of verisimilitude." ¹⁶

"Mr. Quiller-Couch . . . is the master of an exquisite art. Rarely absent from his work, we think it more persuasively present when his revenants are bodily than when they are spiritistic. . . . Everyday material, as this accomplished writer treats it, is weird enough and poetic enough without his summoning the supernatural to its intensifying. . . . Whichever story makes the closest appeal to the reader, he will hardly fail to find somewhere the power, poetry, and

¹⁵ Frances Irwin, *Book News Monthly*, Vol. 28, p. 332.

¹⁶ *Bookman*, Vol. 14, p. 630.

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dramatic instinct without morbidness, of which a book by this writer always holds the promise.”¹⁷

“A. T. Quiller-Couch . . . makes stories that are full of vigor and invention; romantic in temperament, yet realistic in their close observation and in the understanding sympathy with which he studies the life of humble folk and the types and scenes of his native country. . . . His novels and short tales in spirit and method affiliate him with Barrie, Kipling, and Stevenson, and he is little inferior to them in strength and originality; . . . the unpleasant realism and the decadent pessimism of the day he stands quite apart from. . . . The work of A. T. Quiller-Couch is refutation of the charge that the end of the century in English literature has nothing to offer but the morbid and unwholesome.”¹⁸

JOHN GALSWORTHY

Many discerning students of literature look upon John Galsworthy (1867—) as the most promising of all the young British fiction-writers who have risen to fame since Kipling. In such stories as *Jocelyn* (1898), *Villa Rubein* (1900), *A Man of Devon* (1901), *The Island Pharisees* (1904), *The Man of Property* (1906), and *The Country House* (1907), as well as in such dramas as *The Silver Box* and *Strife*, we may discover an earnestness, a keenness of observation, a vividness of characterization, and a style that demand admiration.

¹⁷ *Nation*, Vol. 72, p. 97.

¹⁸ *Warner's Library of the World's Best Literature*, Vol. 20, pp. 11,947-8.

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Galsworthy has been called "a novelist who disdains the plot," and to him the plot is indeed a matter of secondary importance. But whatever may be lacking in this particular is more than compensated by his humor, his keen satire, the distinctness of his characters, and the assurance with which he attacks and analyzes the social questions agitating his nation. In *Fraternity*, for instance, the story resolves itself into a question as to what the leisure classes, who have opportunity for culture, are going to do for the folk whose unceasing struggle for bread precludes such culture. Again, in *The Island Pharisees* we see English pharisaism through the eyes of an idle young gentleman of wealth, who becomes so disgusted with it all that he well-nigh breaks connection with the entire social system. *The Country House*, generally considered Galsworthy's best work, has the same minimum of plot, but perhaps an even greater restless questioning as to the why and whither of present economic and social conditions.

There are some masterly pictures in these stories of modern English discontent. Note but this extract,—the description of a baby in an unhappy household, as portrayed in *Fraternity*.

"His little fists and nose and forehead, even his naked, crinkled feet were thrust with all his feeble strength against his mother's bosom, as though he were striving to creep into some hole away from life. There was a sort of dumb despair in that tiny pushing of his way back to the place whence he had come. His head, covered with dingy down, quivered with his effort to escape.

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“He had been alive so little: that little had sufficed.”

The man who can sketch such a scene is capable of striking hard. John Galsworthy has not spared; in spite, therefore, of his distinct prose rhythm and literary art, he is considered by some critics as inflexible, harsh in color, and lacking in a sense of the beauty of life. Perhaps his themes and the principles he espouses demand such results; but the fact remains that with commonplace people and commonplace scenes he gives astonishing reality—a reality that may be too true to be entirely comfortable. So far he has been a destroyer of traditions and ideals; whether he is a constructive leader remains to be seen.

ROBERT HICHENS

In the work of Robert Smythe Hichens (1864—) we find a type of romance as intensely interesting as that produced in the early years of the nineteenth century, and yet a romance containing a distinctly modern note. *The Folly of Eustace*, *Tongues of Conscience*, *The Woman with the Fan*, *The Garden of Allah*, *The Call of the Blood*, *The Spirit in Prison*, *Bella Donna*, and *Dwellers on the Threshold* satisfy our natural human craving for the romantic, and yet command serious thought. For Hichens has what many romancers lack, ability for keen analysis of character. Subtlety is his also; but he gains what many of the subtle fail to grasp, the epic view of life. Then, too, in the dreamiest moment of romance he never loses his touch of realism.

Choosing characters filled with the restlessness of

modern life, he frequently places them among the mysterious environments of a far land. By such a method the setting becomes a vital element in the story, and possesses and lends fascination. An extraordinary talent for describing scenery rarely fails to make his atmospheres impressive. In *The Garden of Allah*, as in *Barbary Sheep*, the characters seem to be the inevitable product of the desert; in *The Call of the Blood* we cannot escape the joyous, abandoned spirit of Sicily. And yet this atmosphere apparently is not the result of lengthy, concrete descriptions; rather it is the sum total of vague hints and touches of the mysterious.

Complaint has been heard that some of Hichens's later work is too conversational and long drawn-out. It has been noted just as frequently, however, that the concentrated intensity of the latter half of such novels more than compensates for the deliberateness of the earlier pages. Generally his style is direct; we seldom grope for the meaning. Two traits alone, of which he seems to be master—dramatic intensity and the psychic effect of environment—will counterbalance any defects discovered by his critics.

“Certainly he is among the few who are gifted with a faculty developed to the point of genius. His imagination is almost abnormally strong. He has at bottom a great power of dreaming, and while he is realistic, he excels realism in that he sees things with something of the exalted perception of one in a vision. Each episode of his stories carries with it, as in a dream, a sense of prophecy, of ‘expectancy, vague but persistent.’ . . . Instead of rousing us to fresh questionings and uneasy reflections, Mr. Hichens's romances bear us steadily

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onward, with a sense of drifting upon a strong, invisible current, which lulls the mind with an almost narcotic effect and holds the imagination spellbound.”¹⁹

RUDYARD KIPLING

The prince of twentieth-century British story-tellers is one of the youngest of them. Rudyard Kipling was born in 1865; but for at least a quarter of a century he has been producing fiction and poetry so original and so close to humanity that readers ignorant of his life might easily conjecture that he is old in both years and wisdom. To Westerners, there is always something mysterious and mystical associated with the ancient land of India, and Kipling, evidently infused with these traits of the country in which he was born, has, in spite of his realistic descriptions of it, deepened the spell that hovers over it. When, in our reading we come with him to the gigantic ruins of a city in the jungles where monkeys chatter in the king's council chamber; when we see the giant Afghans battling with the sturdy British privates; when, on the road to Mandalay we hear the elephants tramping in the slush; when at night we look up into the vast heavens and hear at the same time the laugh from the barracks or camp and the scream of wild animals in the jungle, we feel that surely this is romance. But when, on the other hand, we swelter in the maddening heat of the Punjab, or listen to the rude and vigorous stories as told by Mulvaney; or hear the latest gossip running through the army post, we are just as apt to say, “This is surely realism.”

¹⁹ G. H. Gaines, *Harper's Weekly*, vol. 51, p. 1206.

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The truth is Kipling is both realistic and romantic. In his descriptions of scenes, army life, British soldiers, and "civilized" natives, he is likely to be accurate to the smallest detail; but one glance at the deep, forbidding jungle, and all the mysticism and romance of his nature are aroused, and then we have stories almost as heroic as any by Scott, and as weird as any by Poe. The dark, almost hideous fascination of the serpents and monkeys outwitting one another in the vast inland deeps has never been excelled in any literature. The ancient wisdom of these jungle denizens as seen in *The Jungle Book*, *Kim*, and similar volumes has something almost terrifying in its unearthliness. Turn, however, to the love affairs of Mulvaney and Dinah, to the barrack scenes in *Plain Tales from the Hills*, or to the animated pages of *Captains Courageous*, and we know that Rudyard Kipling can view modern life with eyes undimmed by any glamour of romance. But the glory of the man lies in this very fact that he can see within the stern realities of existence all the romance one could desire. He compels us to see the poetry in present-day things.

With this keen observation, strong imagination, and daring fancy goes a singular art that seems most simple yet is almost impossible of imitation. In delineation of character Kipling gives but a few vivid descriptive words, a few exceedingly suggestive hints, and the being stands distinctly before us. His adjectives, some of which he seems to have invented, are not always beautiful, but they make a sound that leaves no doubt as to their meaning. In his plot he is surprisingly simple; one wonders why somebody else had not told the story long before. The virility, the animation, the realistic set-

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tings, the closeness of the author to his story, and, at the same time, the glamour of distant romance mingled with it all—these save the plot from any suggestion of baldness. In every form of fiction, from the story of two or three pages to the volume of several hundred, Kipling has been a success; his knowledge of men, his descriptive power, his art in the making of plot, his un-failing vividness of characterization, and his genius for creating an atmosphere mark him as one of the British masters of fiction.

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